

INSIGHTS

Vigorous Asia Drives Global Growth

Voice of the World

Edited by TANG Zhexiong

The Boao Forum for Asia (BFA) Annual Conference 2025, held in Hainan province in south China from March 25 to 28, focused on Asia in the changing world and a shared world, with BFA secretary general Zhang Jun saying a peaceful and vigorous Asia was driving global growth.

Temir Porras, managing director of Global Sovereign Advisory, an international advisory firm, echoed him, saying Asia has been the engine of economic growth for decades now. "The combination of free trade, high-level industries with components of technology, and also a focus on the needs of people are the key for the success of the Asian economies," Porras said.

A report released by the BFA says the weighted real GDP growth rate of Asia is projected to reach 4.5 percent in 2025, an increase from 4.4 percent in 2024.

China and the Association of South-east Asian Nations are among the most appealing economies in Asia.

Tomoki Izumikawa, director of the business department of the Japan Association for the Promotion of International



The photovoltaic devices on the roof of the Boao Forum for Asia (BFA) International Conference Center and a BFA hotel in the Boao zero-carbon demonstration zone in Boao, south China's Hainan province. (PHOTO: XINHUA)

Trade, said in the context of the increasing uncertainty in the world, it is especially significant for Asians to discuss countermeasures.

Asian countries should work together to maintain the stability of the global supply chain and jointly send out the strongest voice to maintain free trade.

Regional cooperation must be strengthened, according to Kin Phea, director general of the International Relations Institute of the Royal Academy of Cambodia. The Asian economy has made important contributions to world economic growth in the past decades, which proves that win-win cooperation

must be based on deeper trade integration, innovation sharing and cultural exchanges.

In recent years, China's sci-tech innovation has blossomed in many areas such as integrated circuits, AI and quantum technology.

Yasiru Ranaraja, founding director of the Belt and Road Initiative Sri Lanka, said China's innovation-driven development model has promoted rapid development in areas such as AI and green energy, showing the world a new development model and providing a successful example for other Global South countries.

Kin Phea echoed his view, commenting that China's innovation benefits not just China but also has a significant impact on global sustainable development.

Many experts at the BFA said that to meet common challenges, countries around the world should strengthen cooperation to promote global governance reform and jointly build a bridge connecting economic and social development.

Frank-Jürgen Richter, chairman of Horasis, a Zurich-based think tank, said international platforms such as the BFA are playing an increasingly important role in improving global governance. Countries can achieve long-term prosperity only by working together to meet challenges, he added.

Trump's Plan to Dismantle Education Department Raises Concerns

Comment

By LIANG Yilian

U.S. President Donald Trump signed an executive order last week to

dismantle the Department of Education "to the maximum extent appropriate and permitted by law."

The move marks a dramatic shift in federal education policy and raises concerns about its impact on international talent exchange and cooperation. The Department of Education plays an

important role in shaping the policies that influence foreign student enrollment, research collaborations, and global academic partnerships. Its closure is bound to create uncertainty and disruptions.

One of the consequences would be the effect on international students studying in the U.S. Federal oversight helps ensure that universities maintain programs that attract and support foreign students, including financial aid, visa assistance, and academic exchange programs. Without a centralized authority, there could be inconsistencies in how states manage these programs, potentially leading to confusion for prospective students.

Given that international students contribute significantly to the U.S. economy — both through tuition fees and their participation in research — any decline in enrollment could have long-term financial and intellectual consequences.

The department also serves as an important channel for addressing student grievances related to academics, visas and discrimination. If it is dismantled, international students may

struggle to find official support when facing academic disputes, visa complications, or campus rights issues. The lack of a centralized authority would make it more difficult for students to have their rights protected and conflicts resolved efficiently.

Additionally, the closure could disrupt international academic collaborations. Programs like the Fulbright scholarships and university partnerships rely on federal coordination, and decentralization may complicate funding and institutional agreements. This could limit opportunities for American students and researchers to engage in global exchanges.

The decision may also affect skilled immigration. Many international students transition into the U.S. workforce through programs like Optional Practical Training and the H-1B visa. Without clear federal oversight, recognizing educational credentials and securing employment could become more difficult.

While proponents argue that decentralization will improve efficiency and give states more control, the broader implications for international talent exchange cannot be ignored.



People stand outside the US Department of Education in Washington, DC, USA, on March 6. (PHOTO: VCG)

Hi-Tech

Large Unmanned Cargo Aircraft Makes its Debut

By GONG Qian

China's domestically developed tonne-class large unmanned transport aircraft recently completed its maiden flight in Shandong province, marking a significant advancement in the field of high-end unmanned aviation equipment.

The aircraft named TP1000, designed and manufactured by a company based in Yantai, Shandong, is nearly 11 meters long with a wingspan of about 15 meters.

It has a long flight range, heavy payload capacity, and low operational costs. It boasts a takeoff weight of 3.3 metric tons, a payload capacity of 1,000 kilograms, a maximum range of 1,000 kilo-

meters when fully loaded, and 7-cubic-meter cargo bay.

With a large rear cargo door, the TP1000 is capable of intelligent air-drop, enhancing its utility in emergency rescue and disaster relief operations.

Compared to its predecessor, the TP1000 delivers improved safety and flexibility, meeting diverse needs in commercial and specialized applications.

Beyond cargo transport, the TP1000 allows rapid customization for marine monitoring, scientific research surveys, resource exploration, and regional infrastructure development.

It is expected to enter into commercial service in 2026.



China's domestically developed tonne-class unmanned transport aircraft, the TP1000, conducts its maiden flight at an airport in Shandong province, March 15, 2025. (PHOTO: Yi-Tong UAV System Co., Ltd / Handout via Xinhua)

Opinion

Spotlight on the Global South

By TANG Zhexiong

Themed "Illuminating Global South", the 2025 Global South Financiers Forum was recently held in Beijing.

Despite the sluggish global economic recovery, Global South countries have secured a steady economic growth and shown remarkable resilience.

According to the UN Trade and Development, as of 2023, Global South countries accounted for 42 percent of world GDP, 44 percent of merchandise exports and 65 percent of foreign direct investment inflows.

"In the next five years, the world GDP will grow by 55 trillion USD, 70 percent of which will come from the Global South," according to UN Trade and Development Secretary-General Rebeca Grynspan.

Financial cooperation is an important area of mutually beneficial collaboration for the Global South.

Dennis Munene Mwaniki, executive director of China-Africa Center at the Africa Policy Institute, said the forum will foster a shared vision for South-South cooperation, and facilitate the establishment of an information sharing mechanism and a pragmatic cooperation framework.

China has been actively promoting South-South cooperation. From infrastructure to food security, from public health to social services, China's financial institutions have built a bridge for Global South cooperation to further enhance people's well-being.

The country has proposed providing 10 billion USD of trade finance to support African exports, and build a pioneering zone for in-depth China-Africa trade and economic cooperation. By the end of 2024, the Export-Import Bank of China (China Eximbank) had supported

the export of specialty products and agricultural products from more than 20 African countries to China.

In 2024, the Agricultural Bank of China provided nearly 100 billion USD in settlement and financing services for trade between China and the Global South countries, supporting more than 100 Chinese companies to carry out project cooperation with more than 40 Global South countries.

Green and low-carbon development is the keyword for high-quality development in the Global South.

Among the overseas projects supported by China's financial institutions, green projects account for a large proportion. The Uganda Karuma Hydropower Station, which was financed by the China Eximbank, was connected to the national grid in February 2024, supplying green power to different parts of the country and the region.

China has taken practical actions to share green development concepts and technologies with developing countries and jointly seek a path for green development.

Besides setting up a China South-South Climate Cooperation Fund to provide 20 billion RMB to help developing countries tackle climate change, China also included "promoting green development" into eight major steps to support joint pursuit of high-quality Belt and Road cooperation.

Observers say that the promotion of South-South financial openness, cooperation and connectivity will effectively help the deep integration of the markets of the Global South, promote the optimal allocation of resources and mutual benefit and win-win results, and become a driving force for global economic growth.



Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni (in white) commissions the Chinese-financed 600-megawatt Karuma Hydropower Station on September 26, 2024. (PHOTO: XINHUA)

Intelligent Solutions Expand Automated Farms

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According to Ai Haipeng, while the XAG project has made strides in pest control, smart irrigation, and remote sensing, 25 percent of the plowing and planting processes still require manual intervention. This is due to limitations in autonomous driving technology for agricultural machinery and the need for fully automated, lightweight seeders.

Breakthroughs in these areas demand substantial investment and long-term technological accumulation.

Reducing costs and establishing standards

After four years of operation, the XAG project has seen rising yields, becoming a benchmark in cotton farming. However, scaling up remains challenging.

Different regions have varied soil conditions, climates and crop types, demanding high adaptability from smart agricultural machinery. Although XAG has developed several smart agricultural machines for different environments, lo-

cal adaptations are still required.

To scale up unmanned farming, new promotion models must be explored. "Collaboration with local governments and agricultural cooperatives is essential to expand this technology," Ai said.

This year's government work report emphasizes the need to advance high-standard farmland construction. According to Hu Lian, vice dean of college of engineering, South China Agricultural University, high-standard farmland is a prerequisite for the large-scale application of unmanned farming, particularly for staple crops like rice.

"With unified planning and standardized farmland, unmanned farms can integrate seamlessly, improving productivity while accelerating the adoption of unmanned farm technology," Hu said. He urged authorities to increase investment in standardized farmland development and establish regulations to support the broader implementation of unmanned farming.