From a Grain of Rice to a World of Greater Equality—China and the Global South: A Story of Shared Development

by Liu Chang

The following is an edited transcript of the remarks by Liu Chang, spokesman for the Embassy of China in the United States, to the July 31, 2026 EIR Emergency Roundtable, titled "Solve the Immigration Crisis with Development—What You Need To Know About the Strategic Significance of Pope Leo's Encyclical." Subheads have been added. The video is available here.

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Liu Chang

Ladies and Gentlemen, first of all, I want to say thank you to the Schiller Institute for inviting me. It's my real pleasure to join you today. Today's topic is "A Dialogue of Civilizations: Development or World War III," so I will emphasize the part of development, and share some thoughts of how China sees global development. My title is "China and the Global South: A Story of Shared Development."

When it comes to development, people tend to think of GDP, investment, or massive infrastructure projects. But for most families, development looks much simpler. It means having lights during the night; roads remaining open through the rainy season; a doctor available when someone falls ill; a young person learning skills that lead to a decent job. These may sound like ordinary things, but that's exactly what development is about. It's not about making the numbers look better; it's about making people's lives better. Development matters when a family can feel the difference, and when an entire community can share in its benefits.

Not long ago, I read a story about farmers in Madagascar planting hybrid rice developed in China. According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, these varieties can produce between 9 and 11 tons of rice per hectare, compared with about 2.8 tons for traditional local varieties. Those figures are more than statistics. To a local farmer, they could mean something more tangible; fuller granaries, a little more income, and a better chance of keeping a child in school.

So, what can a single grain of rice tell us? It reminds us that development cooperation is only meaningful if it improves ordinary lives. And in today's inter-connected world, it raises four larger questions: How do we make development more inclusive? How do we protect it with lasting peace? How do we enable different civilizations to learn from one another? And how do we build a fairer system of global governance? These are exactly the questions that China has been seeking to answer.

China's Four Global initiatives

First, how can the fruits of development benefit more people? China proposed the Global Development Initiative in 2021. Under the initiative, more than $23 billion have been mobilized and over 1,800 cooperation projects launched. But numbers alone do not tell the whole story. The more important question is whether these efforts can change people's lives for the better. In Madagascar, as I mentioned earlier, change means higher yields from the hybrid rice. In Papua New Guinea, change could be a stand of Juncao grass allowing small farmers to grow edible mushrooms without cutting down forests, while creating new sources of income. Or it could be a Luban workshop in Kazakhstan, where local students learn practical skills in areas such as renewable energy, automation, and rail trans-

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portation based on the needs of local industries.

What China seeks is not simply to deliver a project and move on. It is to work with local partners to develop skills, share appropriate technologies, and create opportunities that can take root, continue to grow, and benefit local communities over the long term.

Second, what protects the gains of development? For many developing countries, security means far more than the absence of war. It also means hospitals can continue to operate during floods, droughts, or public health crises. It means stable access to food and energy. It means having the resilience to emerge from challenges. A war can destroy a school overnight. A severe natural disaster or public health emergency can set back the development of an entire community for years.

FAO/Mijoro

Rice is flourishing in Madagascar, the island nation which now has Africa's largest area cultivating high-yield, hybrid rice. In 2007, China launched the hybrid rice demonstration center project in Madagascar, one of 10 such ag-tech specialty centers across the continent.

This is why China proposed the Global Security Initiative in 2022. It calls for a vision of security that is common, comprehensive, cooperative, and sustainable. It emphasizes resolving differences through dialogue and consultation, while also addressing global challenges such as food security, energy security, public health, and climate change. Peace is the foundation on which development grows. And development itself can help address the root causes of conflict and instability, creating stronger foundations for lasting peace.

Third, can different paths of development respect and enrich one another? China's answer is yes. Every country has its own history, culture, and path of development. Cooperation should not begin with the assumption that one country must first become a copy of another. True civilizational exchange is not about one side changing the other, nor replacing the other. It is about learning from each other with equality and respect, drawing inspiration from different experiences, and allowing diverse civilizations to grow together through dialogue rather than compete through exclusion.

In 2023, China proposed the Global Civilization Initiative, which recognizes that the greatest value of mutual learning between civilizations is not to erase differences, but to make those differences a starting point for mutual understanding and mutual reinforcement.

Last but not the least, who should shape global rules, and whom should those rules serve? Today, the contribution of the Global South to global development continues to grow. Yet in some international institutions, its representation and voice remain limited.

In 2025, China proposed the Global Governance Initiative, which emphasizes sovereign equality, the rule of international law, multilateralism, a people-centered approach, and action-oriented cooperation. The goal is not to tear down the existing international system or start over from scratch. Rather, it is to make that system more representative, more effective, and better able to respond to the concerns of developing countries. Global rules should be shaped through the participation of more countries, not written by a few and simply ac-

cepted by the rest. The affairs of the world should be discussed and decided together. And the benefits of development should be shared by all.

These four Global Initiatives reflect China's vision for the future of our world: development gives people hope; security protects that hope; civilizations help us understand one another; and governance provides fairer institutions for shared progress.

From Poverty to Development

China has always been a member of the Global South. We have experienced the long journey from poverty to development, and we understand that there is no single model for modernization, nor any shortcut that can simply be copied and pasted. China is willing to share its experience, but not turn that experience into a prescription for others. We are willing to provide support, but not make decisions on behalf of our partners. We are willing to build bridges, roads, and hospitals, but we also want to work with countries around the world to develop the talent that allows people to shape their own future.

China looks forward to continuing to work with countries around the world so that development is no longer the privilege of a few, but a right shared by all; so that modernization is not painted in a single color, but reflects a landscape of diverse paths and possibilities; and so that every country and every people can take part in shaping our shared future.

Thank you very much.