

## **Thoughts and Suggestions on Heilongjiang Expanding Cooperation With Mongolia at The Background of Heilongjiang Silk Road Economic Belt**

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**Abstract:** *China's "the Belt and Road" initiative and China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor Planning have safeguarded Heilongjiang Silk Road Economic Belt with national strategy and favorable policies, and provided an important grasp and platform to promote the construction. Along with the implementation of "China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor Planning Outline"--the first multilateral cooperation mechanism of "the Belt and Road", cooperation with Mongolia at the background of Heilongjiang Silk Road Economic Belt has become an efficient approach for the province to promote opening up, especially by using geographical and comprehensive advantages of cooperation with Mongolia, promote Heilongjiang channel construction, construct the export-oriented industrial system, and provide diversified cooperation fulcrum, realize the fulcrum. At the same time, Heilongjiang province should not only make good use of practical advantages, but also overcome the three important shortcomings, and finally set up a new concept and new model of regional cooperation.*

**Key words:** *Heilongjiang Silk Road Economic Belt; Heilongjiang Province; Cooperation with Mongolia; Thoughts and Suggestions*

On September 11, 2014, Chinese President Xi Jinping pointed out while attending the summit meeting between China, Russia and Mongolia, "China's proposal of building the Silk Road Economic Belt with joint efforts has received positive responses from Mongolia and Russia. The Silk

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Road Economic Belt could be joint with Russia's Eurasian Railway, and Mongolia's "Prairie Road" initiative, building a China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor." So far, China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor was incorporated into the governmental cooperation level, become a driving force of China, Mongolia and Russia further economic and trade cooperation. The Corridor has also become the regional cooperation corridor with more advantages in "the Belt and Road" strategic pattern since "the Silk Road Economic Belt" and "the 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road" was proposed respectively in September and October, 2013. And it has become an important part of the six regional corridors such as China-Pakistan regional corridor. Because of Heilongjiang province's unique geographical position and comprehensive advantages in the "the Belt and Road" and "China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor Planning Outline", the "China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor --Heilongjiang Land-Sea Silk Road Economic Belt Construction Planning" officially issued in April, 2015 (hereinafter referred to as "Heilongjiang Silk Road Belt" or "Heilongjiang Silk Road Belt Construction Planning") becomes an important part of China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor; as well as Heilongjiang's layout of the international big channel, especially an important grasp and powerful platform expanding cooperation with Mongolia.

### **I. New Chances of "Heilongjiang Silk Road Economic Belt" Based on "the Belt and Road"**

#### *1. The Phased Achievements of "The Belt and Road" Initiative are Remarkable*

With President Xi Jinping proposing "the Silk Road Economic Belt" and "the 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road" respectively in Kazakhstan and Indonesia in 2013 (hereinafter referred to as "the Belt and Road" initiative), this international regional cooperation platform formed by the existing bilateral and multilateral mechanisms of China and more than 60 countries along the B&R, has overcome many doubts and heavy resistance, through the elaboration of "five links" concept, and the establishment of financial institutions of "Silk Road Fund", "Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank", "the New BRICs Development Bank" between the government

and private and regional financial institutions, China's propose not only receive a positive response from countries in the region such as Russia and Mongolia, but also win high praise from foreign countries. "The Belt and Road" initiative has become the highest top-level strategy and national strategy in a long period, guiding economic innovation, coordination, green, open and shared development, activating the endogenous power of sustainable development, and creating a strong support for the exogenous dynamics of economic growth model transformation. In the past three years, as the country continued to increase the policy support and mechanism construction, "the Belt and Road" initiative continues to advance in bilateral and multilateral cooperation, with the effect of cooperation becoming apparent, the potential has been released. At the end of 2015, China has signed cooperation agreements with more than and 30 countries along the B&R; cooperated with more than 20 countries in international productivity; the year-on-year growth of annual direct investment on the 49 countries along the Belt is 18.2%; has built more than 50 overseas economic and trade cooperation zone, with more than 3000 projects; contract amount of service outsourcing reached \$17.83 billion, actual amount \$12.15 billion, an increase of 42.6% and 23.4% respectively. At the meantime of continuous development of trade and cooperation, Heilongjiang Province continues to make breakthroughs in investment and cooperation with Mongolia. Since 2005, Daqing Oilfield's petroleum exploration project in Mongolia's Tamsag Basin determined the Mongolia's oil rich country status, till the end of 2015, the 7 enterprises of Heilongjiang has invested in and set up 9 companies in Mongolia; the total amount of Heilongjiang-Mongolia cooperation has reached \$1 billion.

*2. "China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor Planning Outline"  
Covers Central Areas of Heilongjiang Province*

As an important part of "the Belt and Road", China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor has become the first-launched multilateral cooperation mechanism since the proposal of "the Belt and Road" initiative. On June 23, 2016, witnessed by the heads of China, Mongolia and Russia, the relevant governments of the three countries signed "China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor Construction Planning Outline" in Uzbekistan's capital Tashkent, China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor construction

has become an important achievement of “the Belt and Road”, and the first launched multilateral economic cooperation corridor among six corridors. From the regions of the planning, it covers Tianjin - Beijing - Erenhot - Ulan Bator - Ulan Ude, Vladivostok - Suifenhe - Harbin - Manchuria - Chita, Vladivostok - Blagoveshchensk - Chita, and Chita - Moscow. Beijing-Tianjin area can be directly connected to the Russian Siberian Railway and the Baikal-Amur Railway, has formed the comprehensive competitiveness of the three-side cross-border regional economic corridor in the core area of China, Mongolia and Russia.<sup>2</sup> The Planning covers and radiates the central region of Heilongjiang Province, and has become an important corridor to build Heilongjiang Channel. From the contents of the planning, “the Planning Outline” agreed on 32 key cooperation projects, including infrastructure interconnection, industrial cooperation, port modernization, energy cooperation, the customs inspection and quarantine, environmental protection, science and education, cultural exchanges, agriculture cooperation and health and other areas, which provides a good opportunity and a new path for Heilongjiang deepening cooperation with Mongolia in various fields, to achieve mutual benefit and common development.<sup>3</sup>

### *3. “Heilongjiang Silk Road Economic Belt” Construction Further Enters China’s National Strategy*

In the orientation of “the Belt and Road” and China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor and the new pattern of China’s Northeast, “Heilongjiang Silk Road Belt Planning”, which deepens the development and opening of the border, provides strategic support and development platform for “the Belt and Road”, and further blends in a new round of national regional development and promotes the development of the economic society, is included in the strategic vision of the B&R, and becomes the core area of China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor, as well as an important part of the big picture of regional opening and coordinated development. It can be seen that from the cross-border cooperative pattern of centering on Russia ad facing Northeast Asia, Heilongjiang province’s “Heilongjiang Silk Road Belt” construction has implemented development funds and

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<sup>2</sup> China Business News (Shanghai): Remote Sensing Monitoring to Expose the Ecological Truths of the “Six Corridors” of “the Belt and Road”. 2016-06-09.

<sup>3</sup> China: “China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor Planning Outline” has Important Meaning, Central Government’s Portal Website, 2016-07-11

corresponding projects with the country's release of strategic portfolio and favorable policies. With China and Russia's mutual support and local interactive docking, the deepening of our province's cooperation with Japan and South Korea and adjustment toward Mongolia and North Korea, our province explores comprehensive revitalization and creates a good economic development environment, accelerating in institutional innovation, structure optimization and elements upgrading, which will greatly promote the Heilongjiang province to strengthen the awareness of market competition, pushing industrial restructuring and upgrading, boosting the economy to shake off the dilemma, stimulating sustainable economic and social development, the role of "Heilongjiang Silk Road Economic Belt" construction to stimulate economic development will gradually appear.

## **II. Analysis on Heilongjiang-Mongolia Cooperation at the Background of "Heilongjiang Silk Road Economic Belt"**

### *1. Expanding Cooperation with Mongolia Relying on "Heilongjiang Channel"*

The "Planning Outline" centering on Harbin, relying on Heilongjiang Channel formed by the four trunk railway lines of Dalian-Harbin-Jiamusi-Tongjiang, Suifenhe-Manchuria, Harbin-Heihe, Border Railway, Russia's Trans-Siberian Railway and the Baikal-Amur Railway, construct the international goods transport channel connecting Asia and Europe. At the background of fully coordinating with "the Road and Belt" initiative, it will take five years to build "Heilongjiang Silk Road Economic Belt" into the most convenient and smooth international channel connecting Asia and the Europe. What's more, on the basis of constructing international corridor, developing logistics industry, and reducing logistics cost, it is more important to draw the production elements to areas along the channel, transfer export-oriented industry at home and abroad to our province to form industrial agglomeration and construct developed export-oriented industrial system, and finally to create a new economic growth pole in Heilongjiang province. In other words, accelerating undertaking the industrial transfer from neighboring countries and developed provinces is the core connotation

and the fundamental support of the “Heilongjiang Silk Road Economic Belt”. In this process, Mongolia’s role in building the Heilongjiang Channel is crucial; we have great opportunities to expand logistics and resources cooperation with Mongolia.

*2. Amplifying the Geographical and Comprehensive Advantages of the Heilongjiang-Mongolia Cooperation*

From the layout of the “Heilongjiang Silk Road Economic Belt”, while emphasizing the coordination with “the Belt and Road” and China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor, the planning also fully affirmed the geographical basis, realistic conditions, especially the unique advantages of Heilongjiang Province, which are the premise for the “Heilongjiang Silk Road Economic Belt” to be effectively carried out. From the international and regional cooperation and geopolitical point of view, Heilongjiang province has 2981 kilometers of border with Russian, many ports and a long cooperation history. Cooperation with Russia has regional and geopolitical advantages to be integrated into the Northeast Asia regional cooperation. From the East side, with China and South Korea signing the FTA, China, Japan and South Korea carrying out the ninth round of FTA negotiations, the possibility of international capacity, supply-side structural reform Internet plus cooperation increases in the future, by way of Russia extending to the Northeast Asia and the Asia Pacific. From the strategic adjustment and cooperation situation of the West side, Heilongjiang Province has long history, solid foundation, and profound cultural heritage of cooperation with Mongolia. With the support of the old industrial base and deepening of the “Heilongjiang Silk Road Economic Belt”, equipment manufacturing industry, energy, petrochemical, medicine, agriculture, tourism, education, science and technology and modern service industries of Heilongjiang province continue to show its superiority. “Heilongjiang Silk Road Economic Belt” and system innovation, structure optimization, factor upgrading will further break the economic downturn pressure, and consolidate the existing advantages of Heilongjiang-Mongolia cooperation, and build the new trend of win-win cooperation between Heilongjiang and Mongolia.

### *3. Export-Oriented Industry Layout Based on China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor*

On September 11, 2014, president Xi Jinping held talks with the heads of state of Russia and Mongolia, and proposed to coordinate China's "the Belt and Road" initiative with Russia's Eurasian Corridor and Mongolia's "Prairie Road", creating China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor. At this point, the corridor has become one of the six strategic corridors in "the Belt and Road" initiative, and is likely to become a demonstration area of China Mongolia and Russia's regional economic cooperation and establish a model of free trade and multi-dimensional cooperation for the future cooperation in Northeast Asia and even in the Asia Pacific Region. The fact that "Heilongjiang Silk Road Economic Belt Planning" is included in the framework of China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor means "Heilongjiang Silk Road Economic Belt" construction need to base on China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor whether from the political level, the strategic level or the economic level. Heilongjiang province needs to coordinate the province's construction planning and Mongolia and Russia's development strategies, industry with project, and technology with standards, taking the opportunity of "Heilongjiang Silk Road Economic Belt Planning Outline". Through the establishment of trilateral industrial park and industrial cluster district, to increase direct investment, improve infrastructure facilities, and promote local taxation and employment. While consolidating infrastructure interconnection cooperation of railway, oil and gas pipelines, promoting mutually beneficial cooperation of the emerging industries, technology, finance, e-commerce, and cross-border tourism.

## **III. Reinforce the Cooperation Momentum at the Background of Heilongjiang Silk Road Economic Belt**

### *1. Geographical and Historical Basis of Heilongjiang-Mongolia Cooperation*

On July 14, 2016, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang and Mongolian Prime Minister D.Ergenebat jointly attended the signing ceremony of the cooperation agreements in Ulan Bator National Palace. China and Mongolia have signed more than 10 cooperation agreements covering economic,

trade, energy, infrastructure, finance, climate change and broadcasting, these agreements further consolidate China-Mongolian cooperation projects brought about by China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor Planning, enrich the connotation of bilateral comprehensive strategic partnership between the two countries, and also lay a solid foundation for Heilongjiang expanding the cooperation with Mongolia based on China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor and Heilongjiang Silk Road Belt.<sup>4</sup> As everyone knows, Heilongjiang-Mongolia cooperation began with the normalization of bilateral relations with China and Mongolia in 1989. With different stages of the economic and trade cooperation between China and Mongolia from starting period, fluctuation period, cumulative period, rapid development period and stable period development, Heilongjiang's cooperation with Mongolia also changes gradually from the initial smaller size/ proportion to the expanding scale, optimizing commodity structure, increasing investment year by year, and the rising proportion of cooperation with Mongolia. However, the cooperation has been smaller in scale and fluctuates from 1990 to 1997. Especially in 1998 and 1999, Chinese has become the biggest investment and trade partner with Mongolia, trade volume between Heilongjiang and Mongolia is only \$1.64 million in 1999, accounting for only 0.6% of the amount of trade between China and Mongolia, and 0.07% of Heilongjiang province's total trade. Economic and trade cooperation between Heilongjiang and Mongolia changes greatly at the beginning of this century, and reached its peak before the outbreak of the subprime crisis of 2008. From 2000-2008, with Mongolia making active policies to attracting foreign investment and trade, the prosperous domestic economic, expanding domestic demand and investment demand, and the escalating strategic partnership between China and Mongolia, all lead to a new round of thriving period of China-Mongolia trade and investment cooperation. Heilongjiang Mongolian trade and investment cooperation has entered the period of continuous growth: from 2001 to 2005 the growth rate of cooperation increased consecutively, exceeding the national growth rate with Mongolia in the corresponding period. The proportion of total foreign trade has significantly increased from 0.3% in 2001 to 0.8%. In

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4 China Securities Network: China Signed More than 10 Cooperation Agreements with Mongolia, Covering Many Areas, 2016-07-14, [http://finance.ifeng.com/a/20160714/14597862\\_0.shtml](http://finance.ifeng.com/a/20160714/14597862_0.shtml)

2007, Heilongjiang- Mongolia trade volume exceeded \$100 million; Mongolia has entered Heilongjiang's partnership countries with whom the trade volume exceeding \$100 million.<sup>5</sup> Until recent years, Heilongjiang province and Mongolia Trade has maintained a relatively stable growth, with more than \$100 million in the majority of years. In 2013, with temporary difficulties of the Northeast economy, Heilongjiang's economic downturn pressure increased. And the deterioration of Northeast Asia especially Russian economic situation affected the overall level of foreign trade. But the cooperation with Mongolia goes up steadily. In 2015 the trade volume of Heilongjiang to Mongolia achieved \$120 million, among which exports \$83.63 million, electromechanical products accounting for more than 60%. From January to My in 2016, influenced by the devaluation of the Mongolian currency and the deteriorating economy, Heilongjiang-Mongolia trade is only \$15.61 million, it is expected the annual volume will fall below \$100 million.

*2. Heilongjiang-Mongolia Cooperation Supporting the Diversified Development of Heilongjiang Province's Open Strategy*

"Heilongjiang Silk Road Economic Belt Planning Outline" not only emphasizes on the importance of industrial agglomeration, and ultimately form export-oriented industrial system, but also highlight the special advantages of "Heilongjiang Channel", and the supporting role of expanding cooperation with Mongolia and Russia to the construction of export-oriented industrial system and logistics channel. From the trend and coverage of the channel, it accords with the railway, highway, oil, electricity and natural gas ("five channels") of Mongolia's "Prairie Road". Heilongjiang Silk Road Belt requires not only the formation of Trans-Eurasian Channel, but also further expansion of the variety of cooperation facing the north, North America and Southeast Asia. Harbin as the capital city of Heilongjiang Province has a unique status as the hub of China's North American air routes, and has a realistic basis and favorable conditions to create Chinese North American passenger and cargo routes. Through the implementation of orientation of Harbin in the "Planning Outline" and developing advantages of Harbin's North America and the Arctic route; with the more active diversified

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<sup>5</sup> Zhang Xiujie. Analysis on the Strategies of Heilongjiang Province Expanding Economic and Trade Cooperation with Mongolia under New Circumstances. Heilongjiang Social Sciences. 2012(11).

opening up strategy to expand trade partners, attract more investment; “Heilongjiang Silk Road Belt” will be built into an international trade logistics belt, cross-border agglomeration industrial belt, multilateral win-win open belt, gathering advantage factor from Russia, Europe, Japan and South Korea, Mongolia and North Korea, North America, Southeast Asia and China’s Yangtze River Delta, Pearl River Delta, Circum-Bohai-Sea and other economically developed or relatively developed areas. This is also an effective path for Heilongjiang province taking advantage of the openness of Heilongjiang Silk Road Belt, to cooperate with Mongolia and explore the complementary development.

### *3. Releasing the New Potential of Heilongjiang-Mongolia Cooperation*

The cooperation potential of Heilongjiang-Mongolia is huge in the horizon of Heilongjiang Silk Belt Strategies. From the geo-potential side, Qiqihar city, which is known as the central city in the west of Heilongjiang Province, is geographically close to Mongolia. It can reach the east part of Mongolia directly by Suifenhe-Manzhouli Railway. The Harbin-Qiqihar high speed railway facilitates the transport for the tourism & logistics cooperation between Heilongjiang and Mongolia. From the industrial scale and foundation side, Qiqihar and Daqing area is the centre of Harbin-Daqing-Qiqihar Industrial Corridor. The GDP of the three cities (Harbin, Daqing and Qiqihar) accounted for nearly 2/3 in Heilongjiang Province, which is very strong in commodity production and economic radiation capacity. From the foreign trade and investment side, industrial products such as mechanical & electrical, high-tech light industrial products, daily necessities, etc. accounted for high proportion in the products which exported to Mongolia from Heilongjiang. On the contrary, livestock, fur, milk products, meat products and mineral products are the main products which exported from Mongolia. It is highly complementary in industrial structure of Heilongjiang Province and Mongolia. From the kinship and historical basis, there is a population of about 100 thousand in Dorbod Mongol Autonomous County, Heilongjiang Province, which has historical accumulation and practical basis for the expansion of cultural and tourism cooperation. From the new development opportunity side, Mongolia will give priority to the development of Sino-Mongolia / Russia-Mongolia strategic relationship. Mongolian Prairies Road strategy matches “the Belt

and Road” initiative. With the deepening of China-Mongolia comprehensive strategic partnership, especially the implement of “The Development Plan on the Construction of China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor”, same projects will make the channel in Heilongjiang connect to the infrastructure in Mongolia directly so that to gain the initiative and explore potential for Heilongjiang to expand cooperation with Mongolia.

#### **IV. Overcoming the Three Shortcomings of Heilongjiang-Mongolia Regional Cooperation**

##### *1. Overcoming the Shortcoming of the Imbalanced Regional “Hard Cooperation” and “Soft Cooperation”*

Compared with the preliminary results of China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor in recent years in infrastructure connectivity and other fields, the imbalance between Hard Cooperation and Soft Cooperation is existed in Heilongjiang’s cooperation with Mongolia. Under the guidance of a large number of favorable policies such as “the Belt and Road” infrastructure interconnection, the level of hard cooperation is being improved continuously. The hardware planning, such as Russian No.1 & No.2 Coastal International Transportation Corridor, Chinese land-sea combined transport / river-ocean combined transport / railway-ocean combined transport, Mongolian Prairies Road and so on, has made important contributions to expand the bilateral & trilateral trade and investment cooperation of Heilongjiang-Mongolia as well as the China-Russia-Mongolia. At the same time, the fact that cannot be avoided is that the soft cooperation is lagging behind, compared with the progress of hard cooperation. As a local province, Heilongjiang Province should enhance its soft influence in the aspect of environment protection, sustainable development, public sentiment and using the cooperation mechanism of economic corridor to deal with the friction and contradiction of regional cooperation. And also Heilongjiang should expand its soft power in inspiration, affinity and infectivity so as to create a favorable environment for development. It is necessary to build a soft cooperation mechanism with local characteristics of China and Mongolia so that to change the current situation that more in advance of nations’ cooperation mechanism, lagged

behind of local cooperation mechanism and more lagged behind of soft cooperation of local governments.

*2. Overcoming the Shortcoming of the Lack of Effective Links between “Top-Level Design” and “Local Needs”*

One problem cannot be ignored is the disconnection between and local needs in the process of constructing China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor, which means the local needs lack effective link with the top-level design. It can be seen from the history and reality of the opening-up of China’s border area that there is “temperature difference” still existing between the high expectations of central government and low actual achievements of local governments in the process of promoting cross-border cooperation due to complicated geographical factors, development differences in border areas, different attentions paid by each country and different State administrative system in these countries. It is hot in central government but cold in local government, hot in political but cold in economic & trade, hot in high-ranking officials but cold in general public in the process of Heilongjiang’s cooperation with Mongolia. “The Development Plan on the Construction of China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor” will experience such pain in different periods of its introduction to implement. To ensure its local needs effectively meet the top-level design of central government and to promote the projects related to “The Development Plan” fall to the ground efficient, are the keys for Heilongjiang Province to implement the Development Plan and the “the Belt and Road” initiative. And it is also crucial for Heilongjiang Province to improve its geographical and trade status in the sub-regional cooperation with Mongolia as well as regional cooperation in northeast Asian area.

*3. Overcoming the Shortcoming of the Loose Connection of “Think-Tank Cooperation” and Achievements Transformation*

Not only integrated top-level design of central government, the introduction of the Planning Outline also brought together the local needs of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region and Heilongjiang provinces, and also taken into account the practical needs and long-term aspirations of Russia and Mongolia. However, the Short boards, such as the loose connection of Think-Tank Cooperation and achievements transformation

still exist. Especially, there are lots of problems existing in local think-tank's participation in the planning of national projects and furthermore, to promote its integration between national project and local needs. With the implement of Several Opinions on the Construction of Chinese Characteristic New-type Think-tank issued by Central government and the follow-up of think-tank construction in each province, the think-tank plays an increasingly prominent role in serving the development of economic and society, especially in serving "the Belt and Road" initiative and "Going out" Strategies. Since it is practical and international, the think-tank is an intellectual support in the fields of strategy thought, academic authority, policy application and other aspects to the sub-region international cooperation. At the same time, it is also an objective fact that think-tank's research lags behind the development of reality, low quality in research findings, and limited impact on the media. Now, as an important support to the construction of China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor, the "Northeast Asia Think-Tank Alliance" and the "Sino-Russian Cooperation Think-Tank Forum" which launched by Heilongjiang Provincial Academy of Social Sciences, as well as the "Four Countries (China-Russia-Korea-Mongolia) Think-Tank Alliance" which launched by Tumen River branch of China International Trade Association, have transferred to pragmatic exchanges from communication floating on paper at the beginning of their foundation. The a.m. think-tank alliance, which Mongolian think-tank involved, have made a series of research results which provides the spark of thought and the support of intelligence in the construction of China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor. To rely on the Northeast Asia Think-Tank Alliance, the Sino-Russian Cooperation Think-Tank Forum, international forum as the platform, it is hoped to deepen the pragmatic cooperation between Heilongjiang think-tank and Mongolian think-tank as well as the policy research institute. It is strived to build a multilateral think-tank with bilateral and multilateral international influence, which can better sever the construction of China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor and the long-term cooperation between Heilongjiang Province and Mongolia.

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