

Preface

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The year 2021 marks the 20th anniversary of the Boao Forum for Asia and the fifth anniversary of the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road: Islands Economic Cooperation Forum (“the Forum”). At such a historic moment, I am delighted to see that through the hard work of my old friend Prof. James Randall, Dr. Laurie Brinklow, and colleagues from the Institute of Island Studies at the University of Prince Edward Island, the *Annual Report on Global Islands 2020* will soon be unveiled at the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference 2021 to share firsthand the research results on island studies over the past year with all those interested in island development.

The year 2020, which is thankfully just behind us, has been truly hard and eventful for everyone. Countries and regions around the world, including island economies and societies, have actively responded to the challenges posed by COVID-19. Due to epidemic control measures, neither I nor so many others were able to see our friends and colleagues from other islands over the past year, and the 5th Islands Economic Cooperation Forum, which was scheduled to be held in 2020, had to be postponed. However, just like islands that have been sources of resilience to external crises over much of their histories, this has not deterred our friendship. Hainan Province and its sister provinces on over 30 island jurisdictions around the world, including Jeju Province of South Korea, have joined hands in writing a heroic chapter of fighting the coronavirus. This is a vivid example of Hainan’s vision to promote extensive consultation, joint development, and shared benefits through the establishment of the Forum.

Over the past five years, in addition to the annual Forum, we have also consistently published the *Annual Report on Global Islands*, making an important public and professional contribution to island economic studies. We are delighted to see that these research results are gaining influence and sparking greater debate in the academic community. As is pointed out in this year’s report, strengthening cooperation across our world of islands and building closer networks among islands and islanders remain the overarching theme for island development in our times. In what we hope will soon become the post-COVID-19 era, only by enhancing cooperation and improving

resilience to international public health hazards can island economies achieve better and more sustainable development. It can be said that the *Annual Report on Global Islands 2020* is the best gift that I and all of my colleagues engaged in island studies can offer for the fifth anniversary of the Forum. It crystallizes our unremitting efforts over the past five years to promote island cooperation. It also represents the best wishes for the continuation of this international team to the Forum for the next five years.

As Hainan redoubles its effort to build the world's largest free trade port, we sincerely hope to forge friendships and share development opportunities with more islands, so as to jointly contribute to the establishment of a community that experiences a shared future for global islands.

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