**Reality Check of Australian Allegations Against China**

Recently, some Australian politicians and media outlets have been fabricating lies on COVID-19 of one kind or another. They have played a trick of a thief crying "stop thief" to blame China for spreading fake information. Those preposterous allegations some U.S. politicians and media outlets fabricated in order to shift the blame to China for their inadequate response to COVID-19 have been proved false by media and experts. However, Australian politicians have barely mentioned these, and there are rare reports by Australian media outlets on these. Neither can people see discussion in Australia on U.S. dissemination of fake information.

China is a victim of disinformation, not a disseminator. Lies evaporate in the light of truth. It is time to let facts speak for themselves.

1. Allegation: COVID-19 virus originated in China. On April 3, Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said in an interview with Radio 2GB that the virus started in China and went around the world.

Reality Check: Being the first to report the virus does not mean that China is its origin. In fact, the origin is still not identified. Source tracing is a serious scientific matter, which should be based on science and should be studied by scientists and medical experts.

◆ Historically, places that first reported a virus were often not its origin. For example, HIV infection was first reported by the United States, yet it might also be possible that the virus did not originally come from the United States. And more and more evidence proves that the Spanish Flu did not originate from Spain.

◆ Viruses are the common enemy of mankind, which may appear at any time and in any place. Epidemics are natural in origin, not man-made. The origin of a virus or epidemic is a victim, not a culprit. It is unfair and unacceptable to blame it or hold it accountable.

◆ More and more countries found cases with earlier onset and no history of exposure to China. According to an article published by International Journal of Antimicrobial Agents, the absence of a link with China and the lack of recent foreign travel suggest that the disease was already spreading among the French population at the end of December 2019. Researchers at the Sacco University Hospital in Milan, Italy, found that the strain of the virus from an Italian patient showed genetic differences compared with the original strain isolated in China. Two residents in California's Santa Clara County died of novel coronavirus in early and mid-February. They had no "significant travel history" that would have exposed them to the virus. If they did not contract coronavirus through travel abroad, "that means there was community spread happening in California as early as mid-January, if not earlier than that," according to Dr. Ashish K. Jha, director of the Harvard Global Health Institute. Dr. Peter Forster of University of Cambridge said that the earliest genome which has been placed into the database is not necessarily the origin of the disease. A study conducted by a research team of the University of Barcelona detected the presence of the novel coronavirus in waste water samples collected in Barcelona, Spain in March 2019.

◆On May 19, the 73rd World Health Assembly adopted the resolution on COVID-19 response by consensus. China co-sponsored the WHA resolution and has always been open to joint efforts by the international science community to identify the source of the virus. The resolution strictly restricts the relevant research to identifying the zoonotic source of the virus, intermediate hosts and the route of introduction to the human population, to enhance preparedness of the international community in the future.

◆China supports research on a global scale led by the World Health Organization (WHO) and made by scientists and medical experts based on the principle of professionalism, integrity and constructiveness, in order to enrich mankind's scientific knowledge of this kind of virus, better respond to major infectious diseases in the future, and improve the global public health system and governance capacity.

2. Allegation: COVID-19 may arise from the "wet markets" in China's central city of Wuhan. Australia's Prime Minister Scott Morrison and Health Minister Greg Hunt had on several occasions alleged there was likelihood that "wet markets" in Wuhan were the places where COVID-19 was thought to have originated.

Reality Check: There are no so-called "wildlife wet markets" in China.

◆In fact, China does not have the concept of "wet markets." What we have in China are farmers' markets and live poultry and seafood markets. They sell fresh fish, meat, vegetables, seafood and other farm produce. A few of them sell live poultry. Basically, they are no different from the fish markets or fruit and vegetables markets in Western countries. Such markets exist not only in China, but also in many other countries. They form an important part of people's everyday life. No international law restricts the opening or operation of such markets.

3. Allegation: China did not suspend outbound international flights from Wuhan when the city was put under lockdown, thus causing the spread of the virus to the world. Australian Home Affairs Minister Peter Dutton on April 16 alleged that reports relating to Chinese flights out of Wuhan during the coronavirus outbreak demonstrated the need for "a level of transparency" on the part of the Communist Party of China. Former Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer said in his article on Financial Review that China tried to stop the spread of the virus to other parts of the country but "didn't care that it could spread to other parts of the world."

Reality Check: China took the most stringent measures within the shortest possible time, which has largely kept the virus within Wuhan. Statistics show that very few cases were exported from China.

◆ China put Wuhan under a temporary lockdown as of January 23, meaning that there were no outbound commercial flights or train services from January 24 through April 8，including those from Wuhan to other Chinese cities and to foreign countries.

◆ The Chinese government took the most comprehensive, rigorous and thorough measures in a timely fashion, and effectively broke the chain of transmission. According to a Science report, thanks to these measures, the number of infections in China was reduced by more than 700,000.

◆ Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison claimed on March 20 that, around 80 percent of Australian coronavirus cases have been imported, and that the United States is the country of origin for most of the coronavirus cases in Australia.

◆ The Australian Department of Health noted that only a very small portion of imported cases came from Northeast Asia. Data from Canada's major provinces show that the virus was brought into the country by U.S. visitors. The French research institute Institut Pasteur found that the virus strain circulating locally in France is of unknown origin. None of the imported cases in Russia was from China. In Singapore, cases imported from China were less than one-tenth of those from other countries. The Japanese National Institute of Infectious Diseases believed that the strain confirmed in Japan since early March was not from China.

4. Allegation: Australian media claimed to have secret information that COVID-19 originated from the Wuhan Institute of Virology. On May 2, the Australian Daily Telegraph published an article by reporter Sharri Markson that disclosed a so-called 15-page intelligence document by the "Five Eyes" intelligence alliance, saying that the COVID-19 virus may have originated from the Wuhan Institute of Virology.

Reality Check: All available evidence shows that COVID-19 is natural in origin, not man-made.

◆ On February 19, The Lancet published a joint statement by 27 leading medical experts from eight countries, indicating that scientists from multiple countries have published and analyzed genomes of COVID-19, and they overwhelmingly concluded that this coronavirus originated in wildlife, as have so many other emerging pathogens.

◆ On March 17, five prominent scholars from the United States, Britain and Australia pointed out on Nature Medicine that the evidence shows that COVID-19 is not a laboratory construct or a purposefully manipulated virus.

◆ On April 21, WHO spokesperson Fadela Chaib said at a news briefing that all available evidence suggests the virus has an animal origin and is not manipulated or constructed in a lab or somewhere else.

◆ On May 1, Executive Director of the WHO Health Emergencies Program Michael Ryan said that numerous scientists have looked at the genome sequence of this virus and they were assured that this virus is natural in origin.

◆ The deputy director of Germany's federal intelligence agency doubted the so-called report by the "Five Eyes" intelligence alliance and asked the alliance for evidence to support the allegations that COVID-19 originated from a Chinese laboratory. However, none of the five countries' intelligence agencies said they had released relevant reports.

◆ The Australian government and officials also questioned the document, arguing that the so-called intelligence was only a patchwork based on media reports. An Australian source believes that the so-called secret document might be leaked to the Australian Daily Telegraph by the U.S. Embassy in Australia.

5. Allegation: The draft resolution of the World Health Assembly (WHA) is the result of Australia's promotion. Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne said in a signed article published on The Australian on April 22, that Australia will work with countries that share the same values to set aside the WHO and initiate an independent international review into COVID-19 response. However, Payne told press later that relevant content of the WHA draft resolution drafted by the European Union was first proposed by Australia and her government had been focused to ensure the review "comprehensive, impartial, independent." Some media outlets, such as The Australian, also worked with the Australian government, saying that Australia's claims have been widely supported by the international community.

Reality Check: The WHA resolution is one thing, while the so-called "independent international review" previously proposed by Australia is a different kettle of fish.

◆ China supports a comprehensive evaluation of global COVID-19 response to sum up experience and address deficiencies after the pandemic is brought under control. This should be led by WHO and conducted in a science-based and professional manner. China has been consistent and clear about this all along.

◆ The 73rd WHA adopted by consensus a resolution on COVID-19 response on May 19. On the evaluation of WHO response, the resolution decides that the evaluation should be initiated by the Director-General in consultation with member states to review experience gained and make recommendations for future work. The resolution asks for a stepwise process of impartial, independent and comprehensive evaluation. The relevant resolution is in consistent with China's position and represents a broad consensus of countries worldwide. China has actively participated in the consultations on the draft resolution and co-sponsored the draft resolution.

◆ The relevant resolution proposes to initiate at the appropriate moment an evaluation rather than to launch an "independent international review" instantly, confirms WHO's leading role instead of adopting another mechanism, and calls for an evaluation of experience gained and lessons learnt from the WHO-coordinated international health response, rather than an inquiry based on the presumption of guilt targeting any country.

The so-called "independent international review" proposed by Australia is purely political maneuvering under the pretext of COVID-19. Australian politicians took an exclusive attitude towards WHO when proposing the so-called "independent international review," and the intention of conducting investigations based on the presumption of guilt against China is very obvious.

6. Allegation: Chinese companies have snapped up medical protection materials in Australia. Australian media such as the Sydney Morning Herald, the Australian and 2GB Radio described the humanitarian action of Chinese companies and businessmen in purchasing medical supplies as a "scandal" supported by the Chinese government, saying the purchase in February by Chinese companies may have contributed to shortages of products in Australia in March when the epidemic became severe.

Reality Check: When Chinese companies purchased supplies in Australia in February, the epidemic had not yet spread and there was no shortage of medical supplies in Australia.

◆ In late January and early February, China was at a critical stage in the fight against COVID-19 and was in an urgent need of a large amount of medical supplies. Australian people and companies extended a helping hand to China, and Chinese companies' purchase in Australia was to help China tide over the difficulties. There is no difference from Australian companies' purchase of medical supplies from China in April. They are both humanitarian actions.

◆ In fact, Chinese companies have stopped purchasing medical supplies in Australia since March. Relevant media in Australia maliciously swapped the junctures of the generous donations by people and companies in Australia to China before the spread of the epidemic in Australia and Australia's later material shortage. They used the present tense when mentioning the purchase of supplies for Wuhan by Chinese companies, creating a false impression that China is using Chinese companies to pillage medical materials in Australia.

◆ Since the outbreak spread across the world, China has been providing support and donation to other countries to the best of its capacity despite the urgent need for a large number of medical supplies at home. The Chinese government has provided more than 150 countries and international organizations with surgical masks, N95 respirators, protective suits, nucleic acid test kits, ventilators and other assistance, and facilitated other countries' purchase of anti-virus supplies.

7. Allegation: The Chinese eat bats. On some Australian media and social media platforms, there are pictures and videos of wild animal markets selling bats and pythons, vilifying the Chinese for eating bats.

Reality Check: The shooting location of the content is not China.

◆ Bats are never part of the Chinese dishes. Wuhan Huanan seafood market, where cluster cases were identified in the early days of the epidemic, does not sell bats.

8. Allegation: China has been "infiltrating" Australia to exert its influence. Over a long time, some people and media in Australia are enthusiastic about hyping up such sensational stories as "China spying on and infiltrating Australia." On June 26, Australian intelligence agency and police raided the home and the office of New South Wales lawmaker Shaoquett Moselmane, for allegedly investigating China's influence on Australian politics.

Reality check: Interfering in other countries' internal affairs is not part of the "genes" of Chinese diplomacy. The iron-clad evidence of Australia's espionage targeting China in recent years prove that their claims amount to a farce of a thief crying "stop thief."

◆ China has been committed to the principles including mutual respect and non-interference in each other's internal affairs in developing foreign relations.

◆ Australia has for a long time been playing up such sensational stories as "China spying on and infiltrating Australia" without providing any solid evidence. At a press conference, Moselmane has denied such behaviour as visiting China under the auspices of Chinese government or jeopardizing Australia and its people.

◆ The "Five Eyes" intelligence alliance has for a long time, in contravention of international law and basic norms governing international relations, been engaged in large-scale, organized and indiscriminate cyber theft, spying and surveillance against foreign governments, enterprises and individuals.

◆ Australia has been engaged in activities including instigating defection against China and collecting intelligence by sending secret agents to China’s mainland and Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. As part of intensified surveillance offensive against Chinese institutions and personnel stationed there, Australian intelligence and security agencies have inquired and harassed Chinese Australians on a large scale. They demanded provision of intelligence on Chinese communities and Chinese diplomatic missions, and even sought to develop some into intelligence moles, to manage to infiltrate the Chinese embassy and consulates or return to China under disguise for collecting intelligence as asked for.

◆ In the 1980s and 1990s when China was building its embassy, Australian intelligence and security agencies availed of the chance to install a huge amount of wiretaps in the building, to the point that the Chinese government had to rebuild its embassy in Australia.

9. Allegation: "Chinese spy" Wang Liqiang absconded to Australia. In late November 2019, Australian media outlets The Sydney Morning Herald and others hyped up the so-called "Chinese spy" Wang Liqiang defection. Australian Liberal MP Andrew Hastie told the media on November 23 that the reports about Wang Liqiang were "disturbing," calling Wang a "friend of democracy," and believed that Wang "deserved" protection and support from the Australian government.

Reality Check: Wang Liqiang is a fugitive and has been investigated by the public security organ for suspicion of fraud.

◆ According to a statement released by the Jing'an division of Shanghai's public security bureau on November 23, 2019, Wang Liqiang is a fugitive and has been investigated by the public security organ for suspicion of fraud. The PRC passport and Hong Kong resident document he held were both forged.

◆ The Chinese competent authority noted the misinformation and made clarifications on this case. However, some Australian media and people are still clinging to their wrong position, quoting a person who is a criminal suspect and has zero credibility, hyping up so-called "China threat," and making smear campaigns towards China.

10. Allegation: One million Uygurs are in Chinese custody. Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne echoed the so-called internal documents disclosed by the New York Times without any factual basis, claiming that China has arbitrarily detained more than one million Uygurs, and the contents of the relevant documents are of deep concern.

Reality Check: There are no so-called "re-education bases" in Xinjiang. The so-called detention of millions of people is false information based on wrong conclusions drawn from false research.

◆ The vocational education and training centers lawfully set up in Xinjiang are active attempt on and useful exploration of preventive counter-terrorism and de-radicalization measures. They are essentially the same as other countries' practice to this end. At present, all trainees who received training including standard spoken and written Chinese, understanding of the law, vocational skills and de-radicalization had completed their courses.

◆ Since 2015, China has released seven white papers on Xinjiang's counter-terrorism and de-radicalization efforts as well as vocational education and training work, including "Vocational Education and Training in Xinjiang," which are clear and thorough statements of what happens in Xinjiang.

◆ The New York Times used clumsy patchwork and distortion to hype up the so-called "internal documents" and smear China's counter-terrorism and de-radicalization efforts.

◆ The so-called "one million Uygurs in detention" is a lie concocted on the basis of two highly suspicious "studies." One "study" was based on interviews with just eight Uygurs by the Network of Chinese-Human Righters Defenders (CHRD), which has long been funded by the National Endowment for Democracy. Another "study" was based on unreliable media reports and speculation. Its author Zheng Guoen (Adrian Zenz) is a member of the far-right organization set up by the U.S. government and is also a key member of the "Xinjiang Education and Training Center Research Group" set up by the U.S. Intelligence agencies.

11. Allegation: China launched cyber-attacks against Australia. Australia's Prime Minister Scott Morrison said on June 19 that the all levels of the government, education, health, business, services and other critical infrastructure were being subjected to massive cyber-attacks by a "state-based actor." Reports said that the tensions between China and Australia continue to rise, and China becomes the biggest suspect to launch the cyber-attacks. Cyber security analysts from Australian Strategic Policy Institute said the attack originated from China.

Reality Check: China is a staunch guardian of cyber security and also one of the greatest victims of hacking.

◆ China firmly opposes and fights in accordance with law all kinds of cyber attacks conducted by hackers. During the epidemic, China's hospitals and research institutions have also been attacked by some foreign hackers, same as what happened in Australia.

◆ With the cyberspace being a highly virtual one filled with multiple actors whose behaviors are difficult to trace, one should present abundant evidence when investigating and determining the nature of a cyberspace activity. This is a common sense.

◆ Though Australian Strategic Policy Institute claims itself as an independent think tank, it was in fact funded by at least 56 sources in the 2018-2019 fiscal year. Australian Department of Defence is its biggest funder. Others include the governments of the United States, the United Kingdom and Japan, NATO and Taiwan authorities as well as large arms dealers such as Northrop Grumman and MBDA Missile Systems. In the 2018-2019 fiscal year, 57 percent of the institute's budget came from arms dealers, with an additional 4 million Australian dollars from the Australian government and 440,000 Australian dollars from the U.S. State Department's Global Engagement Center. Between July 2019 and June 2020, the institute won contracts worth some 2,133,000 Australian dollars from the Australian government. However, the institute deliberately glossed over the actual amount of funding it has received from both the Australian and the U.S. governments. The institute, taking an anti-China stance and keen to fabricate and hype up various anti-China issues, has no academic credibility to speak of at all.