**Bridging Cultures, Fueling Futures: A Chemical Engineer's Journey Through the Belt and Road Initiative.**

I am Daniel Estifanos Worku, a chemical engineer originating from Ethiopia. Here is a concise account of my enriching two-week experience in China. Participating in the Belt and Road Petrochemical Industry Technician and Executive Development Program over the course of May 13th to 28th, 2024, proved to be a transformative experience that broadened my professional expertise and enriched my cultural understanding.

**Arrival and Orientation**

When I landed in Shanghai on May 13th, I received a cordial welcome and was promptly escorted to the Somerset apartments, renowned for their outstanding facilities. The following day, the opening ceremony featured inspiring speeches by Ms. Peng and Mr. Zhou Haibo, setting a welcoming tone for the program. The orientation provided a comprehensive overview, and the assistance from three ECUST students was notably helpful.

**Cultural Enrichment and Artistic Endeavors**

On the afternoon of May 14th, I had the pleasure of immersing myself in the art of Chinese calligraphy. It was a fantastic experience, despite the challenge of mastering the intricate strokes. The practice of calligraphy is not just about writing but also about embracing a critical aspect of Chinese culture. Each character I attempted to replicate was a dance of the brush, a testament to the precision and grace that this art form demands.

**Educational Insights and Cultural Immersion**

The lecture on May 15th regarding the development trends and future outlook of green hydrogen energy was particularly enlightening. That afternoon, I delved into the world of Chinese martial arts, where the coach imparted not only physical skills but also philosophical wisdom on maintaining health. Innovations in Hydrogen Energy

On May 16th, field research and a lecture unveiled groundbreaking innovations in large scale hydrogen energy development, with a focus on solid-state hydrogen storage, specifically magnesium hydride (MgH2). The excursion to the Shanghai Bund was breathtaking, offering a mesmerizing view of the city's vibrant skyline from a modern ship.

**Historical Exploration and Artistic Expression**

The experiences at Shanghai's historic Zhu Jia Jiao site, the Oriental Pearl TV Tower, and the night cruise on the Huangpu River on May 17th were among the most memorable moments of my life. Over the weekend, the Suzhou Cultural Garden captivated me with its beauty, and the recitation of poetry by visiting students added to the charm. The tour guide's insights into Chinese traditions, linking natural elements to concepts like imagination, luck, longevity, and wealth, were particularly striking.

**Industry Visits and Demonstrations**

The visit to Zhangjiagang Guofu Hydrogen Energy Company on May 20th showcased the potential of electrolyzer production for both alkaline and PEM systems. The lecture on hydrogen energy integration and the traditional festival on May 21st were equally

impressive. The visit to Yingde Gas Group Co., Ltd. on May 22nd was a highlight of the program, offering an in-depth look at the forefront of green hydrogen production. The company’s commitment to sustainable energy solutions was evident in every aspect of the operation. The lecture provided was not only informative but also inspiring.

**Cultural Heritage and International Relations**

The lecture on May 23rd explored the trends of regional cooperation, though I notedalackof focus on Africa's potential in the petrochemical industry. The afternoon's paper-making activity, creating pandas, was a delightful exercise in intangible cultural heritage, leavingmewith a tangible memento of my time in China.

**Technological Advancements and Festive Celebrations**

The lecture on May 24th regarding the development status of the hydrogen energy industry was highly informative, and the visit to Shanghai Hydrogen Era Technology Co.,Ltd. revealed cutting-edge technology. The Dragon Boat Race at Fengxian Campus on May25thwas a thrilling spectacle, filled with competitive spirit and international camaraderie.

**Gratitude and Reflection**

In conclusion, the program was a whirlwind of discovery and connection. I forged new friendships with peers from diverse backgrounds and seized opportunities for networking. I

extend my heartfelt gratitude to the Shanghai government for their sponsorship, East China University of Science and Technology for their support, the coordinators, lecturers, company CEOs, their staff, and the hospitable people of China. This experience has left an indelible mark on my heart, and I eagerly anticipate my return to this vibrant country.