

First visit of a Chinese President to the EU, focuses on cooperation, but Ukraine will be present

China disagrees with sanctions against Russia, prefers dialogue and negotiations

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With the president of China, Xi Jinping, visiting Brussels for three days, as of Monday, 31 March, New Europe spoke with the Head of China's Mission to the European Union, Ambassador Yang Yanyi:

NE. Ms. Ambassador, the president of China will be visiting the EU, this is the first ever visit of a Chinese President. Is there a specific reason for this visit?

I think this is a very important visit. It is of historical significance. It demonstrates the great importance that both China and the EU attach to their relations. Also, this is a visit taking place at a time when China and the EU are embarking on the second decade of their strategic partnership. Also it is taking place against the backdrop of the fast changing international situation and the fact that both China and the EU are in their respective stage of development which is crucial. So I think the significance is that during the visit, my president will send a very positive, clear signal to Europe, to China, to the rest of the world that both China and the EU are committed to broadening and deepening our strategic partnership to the benefit of our peoples and to the benefit of peace, stability, and prosperity and progress in the world. So it will be a new milestone in the relations of China and the EU and it will provide political guidance to our comprehensive strategic partnership in the coming decade and beyond and also give further substance to our across the board cooperation especially in the field of investment, economic and trade, science and technology, innovation, urbanization, environment and so on and so forth. I think it will give a strong boost to our people-to-people exchange. The significance also lies in the fact that both China and the EU are important global players. So we also wish to take up this opportunity to further strengthen our communication and nation cooperation in major international and regional issues so as to contribute to world peace.

NE. Trade is important, but there are other issues that are important as well. What's China's position on Ukraine?

I think during the meetings, the focus of exchange of views will be on how to further deepening our bilateral relations and of course, we will also use the opportunity to exchange information on our respective latest development, things going on in Europe and also things going on in China. Certainly the leaders will also exchange views on major international and regional issues. I think on the issue of Crimea, Ukraine, China has expounded its positions on many occasions. We are very much concerned and we believe



Both China and the EU are in their stage of development, says Ambassador Yang Yanyi

due to the complexity of the things there, we hope all the parties will work out proper solutions through dialogue and consultation and within legal means. And every party should try its very best to deescalate the situation. Rather than escalating tensions there. Also China is for international mediation. So anyway, I think you are close neighbors. I think it will be in the interest of every country to have a neighborhood rather than have tensions. I think it is worthwhile to look longer term and look into common interest. We wish you well and also you know our position, China firmly opposed the principle of disrespecting sovereignty and territory integrity and this also holds true on this particular issue.

NE. So you believe the current approach—sanctions and such—is counter-productive?

We never believe that these sort of measures work and eventually will harm the people and will not be constructive and helpful. I think better try the best option that is the dialogue, political dialogue and consultation and promote mutual understanding and work out proper solutions. We really don't believe economic sanctions will do the job.

NE. You've said China can participate/facilitate the economic recovery of Europe—in practical terms how do you think that can happen?

I think for one thing, according to this China EU agenda 2020 for cooperation, we should push forth the negotiation on this comprehensive investment agreement. That is very much on the table now. I just learned yesterday we concluded the second round of negotiation which was very productive and constructive. And also I think we need to further push forth our coop-

eration in science and technology innovation and urbanization, environment protection, energy conservation. I think these are areas where we have converging interests. I'm encouraged that last year on the margin of the 16th China EU summit, there was an urbanization forum and many people here went to Beijing to attend that forum and the ministerial relationships set up between various cities in China and also in Europe so that is very encouraging. Also I think we need to encourage young people, the media, scholars, academics to interact with each other. I think we have some programs set in place—people-to-people exchange. We really want to broaden that. In order to help people to be more exposed to China, we are going to set up a China library in the College of Europe. The other day I went to see this library, it is very beautiful, we have many books about China at least the first bunch will be some 10,000 books about China so that is also very helpful. I hope that we can have some more projects like this set up in various member countries in Europe or here in Brussels. Also on the security side, what I can share with you is lately we had this defense dialogue between China and the EU, and also lately we held a joint exercise in the Gulf of Aden a counter piracy joint exercise between China and the EU which is also helpful. I think yesterday I attended a forum on China-EU relations and a there a question was raised on security. I think that what we can do together in the future, is that for instance there is this ASEAN regional forum and within that forum we can have some joint exercise on counter piracy and search and rescue. And also bilaterally China and the EU can conduct some activities along this line.

NE. This means there's a change in the position of the Chinese government regarding security—up until now, China was

a little bit shy to project power far from its shores.

We are not doing this out of the intention of projecting power. But the true story is China was very much engaged in bilateral interactions with other countries, multilateral exercise was something new. At the beginning of the 90s actually, we began to be more engaged in multilateral activities. That's why China was a participant of the ASEAN regional forum and China has become a very active in regional forums. China is very open to these multilateral forum institutions because we believe we live in an intertwined, interconnected world. So it will be helpful that China is engaged in such kind of multilateral venture and in the final analysis China is one of the permanent members of the security council of the UN. China showed us the responsibility in terms of peace and security. China is actually very open. WE have come a long way in terms of these multilateral exercises.

NE. So what should we expect after the president's visit?

I think implementation. So for me, I mean here in the mission, we will for instance conduct various strategic dialogues. There is a high level people-to-people dialogue that will take place in late May. So we will prepare for this dialogue. And also we will work very hard on this negotiation on investment agreement. In the meantime we encourage the EU to look at the possibility of the feasibility study of this FTA between China and the EU. And also culture-wise we are conducting more projects and we will follow up on this China library and we encourage people to go there and also to have more exchanges between the media as well. So we invite you over to China. It would be our pleasure to show you around.