

Lunar New Year Message from H.E. Wang Yi
State Councilor and Minister of Foreign Affairs of
The People's Republic of China

2021/02/07

Your Excellencies ambassadors,
Members of the diplomatic corps,
Representatives of international organizations,
Friends,

In just a few days, we are going to celebrate the Chinese Spring Festival, a time for ushering in the lunar new year and exchanging greetings with families and friends. Each year, the Chinese Foreign Ministry invites ambassadors and other diplomatic envoys to gather together ahead of the festival to mark the auspicious occasion. Due to COVID-19 this year, we have to use video to send our greetings. So on behalf of the Chinese Foreign Ministry, I wish you, your families, and your colleagues a very happy Chinese New Year.

The year 2020 was very unusual for the Chinese people and the world. We appreciate the preciousness of life in combating the virus. We feel the warmth of cooperation in going against chilly economic headwinds. The whole world is in this together, and the entire humanity is bonded by the same future.

Over the past year, we in the Chinese foreign service remained committed to the vision for a community with a shared future for mankind. Guided by the head-of-state diplomatic endeavors, we focused on promoting international cooperation against COVID-19, fought both the coronavirus and the "political virus", firmly safeguarded China's sovereignty, security and development interests. We worked with people of all countries to meet challenges, pursue development, and promote changes. We have made new contributions to peace and development of the world.

Over the past year, the Chinese people stood with the world in fighting the pandemic. During the most challenging time of China's battle against COVID-19, 77 countries and 12 international organizations extended us a helping hand, leaving behind many touching stories that give true meaning to the word "community". When the virus hit other parts of the world, China cooperated closely with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the international community, and launched the largest global emergency humanitarian campaign in its history. We provided assistance to over 150 countries and 13 international organizations to help bring the world together in defeating the virus.

Over the past year, through innovative "cloud diplomacy", President Xi Jinping had 88 phone calls and meetings with foreign leaders and heads of international organizations, and attended 23 major video conferences. This not only brought China and the world closer together, but also enriched China's relations with many countries.

Over the past year, China endeavored to be a source of growth and confidence for the global economy. We further deepened structural reform and expanded institutional opening-up. We promoted economic globalization and regional economic integration. We signed the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership agreement, concluded the negotiations for the China-EU investment agreement, and pursued high-quality Belt and Road cooperation.

Over the past year, China took concrete steps to uphold multilateralism. We continued to support the leading role of the United Nations (UN) and WHO, and champion the building of a global community of health for all. We announced the enhanced nationally determined contributions, including the target years to peak carbon dioxide emission and achieve carbon neutrality. We also proposed the Global Initiative on Data Security to address the common concerns of the world.

Over the past year, you, members of the diplomatic corps in China, stayed on your post, fought the virus, and endured the difficulties with the Chinese people. You worked tirelessly to promote your countries' friendship and cooperation with China. For all your hard work and all the progress made against all odds, I extend to you my sincere appreciation.

Friends,

The year 2021 is very important for China. We will celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Communist Party of China, implement the 14th Five-Year Plan in all respects, and embark on a new journey toward fully building a modern socialist country.

The year 2021 is also crucial for the world. At the recent World Economic Forum Virtual Event of the Davos Agenda, President Xi Jinping pointed out that the four major tasks of our times are to promote world economic growth, abandon ideological prejudice, close the North-South divide, and tackle global challenges. And the solution is to uphold multilateralism and build a community with a shared future for mankind. His important propositions have been well received in the international community. They have pointed out the direction for addressing global challenges and promoting human progress.

In the new year, we in the diplomatic service of China will continue to follow the guidance of Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy, meet the challenges head on and step up to our responsibilities. We will deepen friendship and cooperation and expand converging interests with countries around the world, and make our best efforts to build a community with a shared future for mankind.

We will stand in solidarity with countries across the globe to secure an early victory against COVID-19. The world won't be safe until the virus is defeated in each and every country. China will continue to do its best to assist countries in need. We will deliver on our commitment of making vaccines a global public good, help achieve vaccine accessibility and affordability in developing countries, and steadily cement the strong line of defense against the virus globally.

We will work with other countries to boost global economic recovery and development. We will open more "fast tracks" and "green lanes", accelerate the development of the green Silk Road, health Silk Road and digital Silk Road, keep the global industrial and supply chains stable and smooth, and scale up support for other developing countries. We will foster a new development paradigm in China, and through this, provide a more robust driving force for global economic recovery.

We will step up exchanges with other countries to safeguard international peace and stability. We will further elevate the China-Russia comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for a new era, enhance political mutual trust and practical cooperation with the EU, and promote a community with a shared future in the Asia-Pacific. We will step up the building of China-Africa, China-Arab and China-Latin America and Caribbean communities with a shared future to enhance solidarity and friendship with fellow developing countries.

The China-U.S. relationship is the most important bilateral relationship in the world. It stands now at an important juncture. In the interest of both peoples and the world as a whole and in the spirit of no conflict, no confrontation, mutual respect and win-win cooperation, we are ready to restart dialogue and consultations, manage properly the differences, focus on mutually beneficial cooperation, and bring the bilateral relationship back on the track of sound and steady development.

We will collaborate with other countries to promote fairer and more equitable global governance. This year marks the 50th anniversary of the restoration of China's lawful seat at the UN. This year is also the 20th anniversary of China's accession to the World Trade Organization. A review of the past sheds light on the future. With greater resolve, China will advocate and promote multilateralism. With greater enthusiasm, China will participate in building a more effective multilateral mechanism led by the UN, and contribute to a fairer and more equitable global governance system.

We will stand together with other countries, rain or shine, to take good care of our Mother Earth. For humanity, the Earth is our one and only home. This year, China will host the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. This year will also see a number of important international events on climate change and environmental protection. These are good opportunities for countries to make the Earth a better home, where humanity can live in harmony with nature and embrace sustainable development.

Friends,

The Lunar Year of the Ox is just around the corner. Oxen are known for their diligence and strength in both Eastern and Western cultures. The Year of the Ox will be a year of hard work and harvest. In this new year, let's work together for closer friendship and cooperation between China and the world, and for greater peace and prosperity of the world.

<http://www.chinamission.be/eng/mhs/t1852119.htm>

Xi calls for drawing new China- CEEC cooperation blueprint

Updated: Feb 10, 2021 09:15 AM Xinhua

BEIJING — President Xi Jinping lauded the cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European countries (CEEC), calling on relevant countries to keep up the momentum and work together for a new chapter in China-CEEC cooperation.

Xi made the remarks while delivering a keynote speech at the China-CEEC Summit via video link on Feb 9.

China-CEEC cooperation is based on mutual respect and has no political strings attached, Xi said, adding that all countries involved, regardless of size, are equal partners in a cooperation mechanism featuring extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits.

The China-CEEC cooperation mechanism came into being in 2012 against the backdrop of the European debt crisis.

Xi said that China-CEEC cooperation has developed some principles that are reflective of its distinctive features and accepted by all parties: making decisions through consultation, delivering benefits to all cooperation partners, pursuing common development through openness and inclusiveness, and achieving better growth through innovation.

"China stands ready for vaccine cooperation with CEE countries," Xi said. So far, Serbia has received 1 million vaccine doses from a Chinese company, and there is ongoing cooperation between Hungary and Chinese vaccine companies, he said.

"China will actively consider such partnerships with other CEE countries if there is a need," Xi added.

In an innovative and pioneering spirit, China and CEE countries have taken steps early to align cross-regional cooperation with Belt and Road cooperation, making Central and Eastern Europe the first region where all countries have signed agreements on Belt and Road cooperation, Xi said.

http://english.www.gov.cn/news/topnews/202102/10/content_WS602333b0c6d0719374af8adf.html

Nation to enhance trade ties with Central, Eastern Europe

Zhong Nan

Updated: Feb 10, 2021 08:53 AM China Daily

China will actively expand its imports from Central and Eastern European countries and aim to boost balanced and sustainable trade between them, a

Ministry of Commerce official said on Feb 9.

The official made the remarks after President Xi Jinping hosted the China-CEEC Summit in Beijing on Feb 9 and made a keynote speech via video link. Leaders or high-level representatives of Central and Eastern European countries and representatives of China-CEEC cooperation observers attended the summit.

China is planning to import more than \$170 billion worth of goods from Central and Eastern European countries over the next five years. Zhai Qian, director-general of the ministry's European department, said this goal is pragmatic and will help these partners more quickly achieve economic recovery.

Central and Eastern European countries have comparative advantages in mechanical and electrical products, automobiles and parts, agricultural and textile products, mineral raw materials and other goods. There is huge room for China to expand imports from those countries, he said.

Since its inception in 2012, the China-CEEC cooperation mechanism has become an all-around, multilevel and wide-ranging multidimensional platform for mutually beneficial cooperation with progress in trade, investment, contracted engineering projects and connectivity.

The total trade value between China and the 17 Central and Eastern European countries increased 8.4 percent year-on-year to \$103.45 billion in 2020, exceeding \$100 billion for the first time, higher than the growth of China's foreign trade and its trade with the European Union during the same period, according to the General Administration of Customs.

The GAC said it will speed up the process of importing high-quality agricultural products from Central and Eastern European countries, such as Poland and Hungary, this year.

Apart from enhancing economic and trade cooperation with Central and Eastern European countries, China will promote e-commerce cooperation, as the sector's trading volume has notably surged amid the world's fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, said Zhai, from the ministry, adding that companies from

both sides have already built many partnerships in cross-border e-commerce and overseas warehouse operations.

As the summit proposed to promote the establishment of a dialogue mechanism for e-commerce cooperation between the two sides, it will help all parties to exchange views in the field of e-commerce, explore new business models and create new channels for their economic development, he added.

The Ministry of Commerce has recently signed memorandums of understanding on investment cooperation and trade promotion with its counterparts in Albania, Serbia, the Czech Republic and Hungary, creating new platforms for deepening economic and trade cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European countries.

Zhai said both sides will implement these cooperation agreements, strengthen policy exchanges in the field of the economy, and jointly promote trade and investment liberalization and facilitation to support global economic recovery.

"The summit will not only deepen economic, healthcare and people-to-people exchanges between the two sides, but will also further boost links between China and Europe in fields such as COVID-19 vaccines, the development of a supply chain and the China-EU freight train service," said Zhang Yongjun, a researcher at the Beijing-based China Center for International Economic Exchanges.

Despite the pandemic, investment cooperation between the two sides has continued to grow.

By the end of 2020, China's cumulative foreign direct investment in Central and Eastern European countries' industries including energy and logistics totaled \$3.14 billion, while those countries' cumulative investments in China reached \$1.72 billion, according to the ministry.

Cooperation between China, Central and Eastern Europe bears fruit

Updated: Feb 07,2021 07:36 PM Xinhua

BEIJING — Cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European countries (CEECs) has become closer in multiple areas, including trade and investment, the promotion of China-Europe freight trains and project agreements.

The following are some highlights of economic and trade cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European countries.

— China's total trade volume with 17 CEECs reached \$103.45 billion in 2020, crossing the \$100-billion mark for the first time, data from the Ministry of Commerce shows.

This marked a year-on-year increase of 8.4 percent, higher than the growth rate of China's foreign trade and its trade with Europe as a whole.

Logging an average annual growth rate of 8 percent from 2012, the growth of China's trade with CEECs is three times the growth of its foreign trade and two times the growth of its trade with Europe as a whole.

— China's foreign direct investment in the economic sectors of 17 CEECs, including energy, infrastructure, logistics and automobile parts, totaled \$3.14 billion by the end of 2020.

The 17 countries invested \$1.72 billion in China during the period.

— The number of China-Europe freight trains stood at 12,400 in 2020, with key passages and destinations including Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic.

— Last year, the total contract value of China's newly signed overseas projects with the 17 countries spiked 34.6 percent to \$5.41 billion.

http://english.www.gov.cn/news/international/exchanges/202102/07/content_WS601fd0a7c6d0f7257694546b.html

http://english.www.gov.cn/policies/infographics/202101/29/content_WS60136feb6d0f72576944bbe.html

Premier answers concerns of European entrepreneurs

Updated: Feb 07, 2021 11:38 AM english.www.gov.cn

Premier Li Keqiang spoke with nearly 30 European entrepreneurs via video link in Beijing on Feb 5.

During the talk, he responded to the entrepreneurs' concerns regarding China's market and consumption, China-Europe trade and investment, China's business environment, the fight against COVID-19, and actions to deal with climate change.

The Chinese economy has deeply integrated into the world economy, and reform and opening-up is the only way for China to achieve modernization, the Premier noted, adding that China has achieved development through opening-up and has raised its level of development in the process.

"China will stay determined to open-up further and remain committed to promoting trade and investment liberalization and facilitation," he said.

The Premier also suggested all parties meet each other halfway, jointly uphold multilateralism and other international consensus, and abide by the rules-based multilateral trading system and the principles of fair competition.

Leif Johansson, chairman of AstraZeneca, a British biopharmaceutical company, showed concerns on how to strengthen cooperation to ensure successful distribution of vaccines around the globe.

Premier Li responded that vaccines are the ultimate weapon in the fight against the pandemic and are global public products, thus the international community should strengthen global vaccine cooperation.

The successful cooperation between European pharmaceutical companies and their Chinese counterparts in vaccine production once again proves that maintaining the stability of the global industrial and supply chain is crucial to global work and production resumption and the well-being of mankind, the Premier said.

"China will continue to strengthen cooperation with other parties on research and development of vaccines and drugs to better safeguard the health and safety of the people."

Jean-Charles Decaux, chairman of the executive board of JCDecaux SA, made suggestions on business environment and achieving fair competition among businesses of all kinds of ownership.

"The Chinese government has devoted itself to constantly improving business environment and promoting fair competition," Premier Li said. "And no business, no matter what kind of ownership it holds, should be under unreasonable restrictions."

As China is still a developing country with unbalanced development among regions and relatively large gap internally, it is hard to avoid some individual cases, but they will be addressed according to rules as soon as they are found, he said.

The Premier added China will strictly obey the international rules, especially the bilateral and multilateral rules in the fields of economy and trade.

Any agreement will be put into practice once reached, he added.

BASF's CEO Martin Brudermüller and SAP's CEO Christian Klein said in their speeches that they hope to strengthen cooperation with China in dealing with climate change and digital development.

"Reducing the consumption of fossil energy will first come to people's mind when they talk about dealing with climate change. Actually, people also have to protect the planet which they depend on for survival, and the international society should make joint efforts in reducing emissions and pollutions because there is only one earth as the home of mankind," said the Premier.

As a manufacturing giant, China perseveres in pursuing high-quality development, promoting low-carbon transition in energy structure and all-around green transformation in economy and society while making full use of the country's stock resource, said Premier Li, adding that the cooperation between China and the enterprises will help deal with climate change, improve air quality and promote the qualities of life for ordinary people.

According to Premier Li, recently President Xi Jinping said China will strive to peak its carbon dioxide emissions before 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality before 2060, and the Chinese government is working on a schedule for that.

"China-Europe cooperation in green development, digital economy and intelligent manufacturing have bright future. It is China's hope that Europe can expand its opening-up in certain areas such as clean energy. China is willing to strengthen relevant cooperation with Europe to better serve the interests of people around the world."

http://english.www.gov.cn/premier/news/202102/07/content_WS601f60aec6d0f725769453fe.html

"Strategic Conversation" between Ambassador Zhang Ming and Dharmendra Kanani, Friends of Europe

2021/01/29

On 27 January 2021, Ambassador Zhang Ming, Head of the Chinese Mission to the EU, held an online "strategic conversation" with Dharmendra Kanani, Director of Asia, Peace, Security, Defence, and Digital of the European think tank "Friends of Europe" on issues such as China-EU-US relations, China-EU investment agreement, 17+1 cooperation, Covid-19 and economic recovery. The following is the transcript:

Kanani: A very warm welcome to the Friends of Europe strategic conversation series. This series is about speaking to leaders, thinkers, influencers, decision-makers, commentators, who have a view and ability to shape our societies and our worldview of matters. Today, I'm very pleased to welcome Ambassador Zhang Ming, who is the Ambassador to the EU from the People's Republic of China. I have a great opportunity to spend half an hour with him talking about all matters (on) China. As everyone has known, there isn't a day, a week in the past, however long, where we haven't talked about the role, capacity, implications, and influence of China, both on Europe and the world. Today, especially at the beginning of this year, we know that with the changing relationship across the pond in relation to the new Biden presidency but also in the context of a comprehensive agreement of investment with China, there are a number of issues here in the context of one of the most severe situations we've encountered in the past 130 years, which is an economic and health crisis combined.

So Ambassador, very warm welcome to you and thank you for making the time to speak to me. Warm welcome. Zhang, I want to start with the big question about how the expectations are of China in relation to the EU in the context of a number of points that are affecting global relations and EU-China relations. What do you see as the future of the relationship with the EU especially when every week, every day, there's a hardening of the approach in the sentiments, feelings, and views of your policies in China? What is your sense of the future relationship?

Zhang: Thank you, Mr. Kanani. No doubt, China-EU relations are of crucial importance. 2020 was not an ordinary year. With great difficulties in the international environment and the wide spread of COVID-19, every country and individual are severely affected, coming under huge pressure and challenges. China-EU relations are no exception. Yet looking back, we are happily surprised and proud to find that 2020 saw a robust growth of China-EU relations. High-level exchanges were more frequent than ever before. President Xi Jinping had over 20 phone calls or video meetings with European leaders. The two sides held the 22nd China-EU Summit and launched new high-level dialogues in green and digital fields. The two sides formally signed the Geographical Indications Agreement and concluded the investment agreement negotiations as scheduled. We also joined forces in upholding multilateralism, fighting the COVID-19, promoting economic recovery, and addressing global challenges.

A quote by Charles Dickens seems to be an apt description: “It was the best of times; it was the worst of times” . China-EU relations are advancing against all odds. This reflects what we Chinese believe, that is, from a crisis opportunities arise. To turn a crisis into opportunities, three things are crucial. First, China and the EU have major shared interests and need each other as partners. Second, China and the EU are well aware of their shared responsibilities in safeguarding world peace and prosperity, promoting healthy globalization, upholding multilateralism and improving global governance. Third, China and the EU have a shared commitment to cooperation and dialogue. We commit to promoting cooperation, resolving or managing differences through dialogue rather than confrontation. We reject any destructive attempt to poison international relations or to preach for the so-called new Cold War.

This year, China and the EU have a rich agenda, although challenges never fall short. The two sides need to keep the sound momentum of their relations and make more concrete efforts to promote high-level exchanges, push for the follow-up procedures of the investment agreement, coordinate COVID-19 response on both health and economic fronts, step up green and digital cooperation, and strengthen multilateral governance. This serves the interests of China and the EU and contributes to global stability and prosperity in this uncertain world.

Facts have proved that China and the EU are comprehensive strategic partners, not “systemic rivals” . Dialogue and cooperation for mutual benefit have always been the keynote of China-EU relations. China and the EU are two major forces, markets and civilizations. China-EU relationship has a value of its own and follows its own logic in development. The course of its growth will not be changed due to a particular event at a particular time.

As for the European attitude toward China, I believe that in dealing with state-to-state relations, common sense matters. I could tell from my conversations with EU colleagues that they agree with me. We welcome and listen carefully to sensible and constructive criticisms, as such voices could help enhance mutual understanding, reduce suspicions, and make all of us better off. Yet it is totally unacceptable to attack and discredit China by lying for political or personal gains. I hope that European friends, notably think tanks and scholars, could take a closer look at China’ s history, culture and realities, see China in an objective, rational and respectful light, bear in mind the importance of China-EU cooperation to the two sides and the world, and enhance public support for China-EU relations.

Kanani: Thank you for that. One of the points that's been clear over the past 4 years is that we've not had a lot of objectivity and rational approach to global relations, especially when one of the biggest players was a significant fly in the ointment, which has now been removed thankfully as many people would concede. With the past passage of Mr. Trump and now the appointment of Mr. Biden as President of the USA, there is a lot of hope attached to that new presidency and a sense of normality in order being returned to global relations. We know that as a result of the Trump era but also what happened around the pandemic, China became the target of a lot of offense and a sense that you are culprits, but also involved in a whole range of different things that you referred to, the whole machinery of fake news that we now have come to know very well. But some of it, as other objective commentators would say, is not all fake. But from your perspective, Zhang, what does the Biden presidency hold for you in terms of not only the dynamic of EU-China relations but also global relations? Because, as you say, it felt like a new Cold War that had emerged in the past 24 months, 36 months that was emerging. We now have a new wind of change that hopefully warms affairs between the east and west. What's your view on the new appointment and the presidency of the US in terms of Biden?

Zhang: China congratulates President Joe Biden on his inauguration and looks forward to working with the new US administration in a spirit of no conflict, no confrontation, mutual respect and win-win cooperation. We hope that the US could join our efforts to step up cooperation, manage differences, and bring China-US relations back to a sound and steady track.

Over the years, for obvious reasons, China-US and EU-US relations have encountered difficulties. China and the EU are both victims of unilateralism and protectionism, and both advocate multilateralism and an open international trade system. The US has decided to return to the Paris Agreement and the World Health Organization. The world today faces both grave challenges and rare opportunities. As President Xi Jinping said at the World Davos Forum virtual event a few days ago, we cannot tackle common challenges in a divided world, and confrontation will lead us to a dead end. In addressing the current crisis and building back better, the whole of mankind must work together in solidarity. Multilateralism is highly relevant at the moment. Multilateralism is about having international affairs addressed through consultation. The future of the world must be shaped by all countries. It is up to all of us to build consensus and join forces in tackling global issues like COVID-19, climate change, economic recovery and digital technologies. We must let the torch of multilateralism light up humanity's way toward a community of shared future. This serves the interests of China, the EU and the US, and benefits all people around the world.

China and the EU have a major role to play in promoting world peace, common development and human progress. China and the EU are comprehensive strategic partners with 45 years of diplomatic ties. China-EU relationship has stood the test of time and has a solid basis and a value of its own. It is not attached to any other major-country relations. I have strong confidence in the steady development of China-EU relations. I notice that the EU is a strong advocate for strategic autonomy and open cooperation. Hopefully, such a spirit will continue to guide the EU's foreign policy and contribute to world stability and development.

Kanani: Thank you for that. Because time is running out, I want to move to some very important points you have made. So clearly, there is hope that with the Biden presidency we will see a renewed sense of multilateralism, global health, and a view of thinking about the world in that interconnected way, which

globalization has presented to us in the past 20 years. There's something here about this hope that the pragmatism perhaps settles the turmoil that we experience in the past, in terms of things that reel the world economy, in terms of trade, industry, industrial relations, values and investment. One of the things that you said the EU-China relationship has effectively been able to address but also stand the test of time is the comprehensive agreement on investment, which Germany, there's no kind of shy away from that, was a key player in making sure there was an agreement on the table. What's your sense now of how that will play out? Because you said, and it's quite interesting, that we need to think about common sense in terms of our approach of pragmatism. But what does the comprehensive agreement say about the view that Europe has of China and China has of the EU? I'm particularly interested in how you deal with the issues around labor laws, the kind of issues that people in the EU are concerned about. So firstly, let's think about what does CAI mean? Does it mean that we have a different kind of approach to China and Asia more widely? But also specifics around what it means for what you refer to, that is the common sense pragmatism about how we relate to each other and the values that we hold dear?

Zhang: As Chinese President Xi Jinping said during the recent video conference with EU leaders, the investment agreement will widen market access, improve the business environment, strengthen institutional safeguards, and create a brighter prospect for cooperation for Chinese and EU investors. The agreement is the first high-standard investment agreement between two of the top three economies in the world, and therefore, could serve as a good example.

The agreement will further remove barriers to the two-way investment between China and the EU, and contribute to a large investment ecosystem across Europe and Asia. The agreement will not only benefit China and the EU, but also give a strong boost to global economic recovery, promote trade and investment liberalization and facilitation, and enhance global confidence in economic globalization and free trade. It represents a major contribution to world economic openness made by China and the EU as two big markets. This is indeed a valuable asset, given that the world economy and globalization are hard hit by the COVID-19 and the rise of unilateralism and protectionism.

The agreement is essentially about investment, not a geopolitical tool. For China and the EU which are comprehensive strategic partners, reaching an investment agreement is not something surprising and was a decision made independently. The agreement conforms to the megatrend of economic globalization and investment facilitation and aims to deliver benefits to all. An investment agreement between two major economies like China and the EU brings added-value to free trade, multilateralism and the welfare of Chinese and EU citizens and businesses.

As for whom Europe should cooperate with, it is entirely up to Europe to decide. I don't think it is an either-or question, but a multiple-choice question. Europe is able to answer the question in an independent and mature way.

Kanani: Thank you. What does the agreement say for the 17+1 plan now that we have the agreement in place? What does the future hold for those 17+1 plans?

Zhang: As I said, the investment agreement is crucial for China, the EU and the whole world. After entry into force, the agreement will cover all the 27 EU member states, including twelve 17+1 members, and therefore give a boost to investment cooperation between China and CEE countries. In fact, capital interflows between China and Europe including the CEE region, are rather small compared to bilateral trade. Further tapping into the potentials in this regard could promote growth in China, EU, and CEE countries and contribute to the European integration process. This is something China will be glad to see.

Since its establishment 8 years ago, 17+1 has produced early harvests and major results in nearly 20 areas. China is of the view that 17+1 is part of China-Europe cooperation and is a useful supplement to China-EU cooperation. The mechanism was launched by China and CEE countries of their own will and in response to their mutual needs. We have no interest to reinvent the wheel or pursue a geopolitical agenda. The 17+1 is open, transparent and inclusive. The EU and the relevant countries are invited to observe every 17+1 leaders' meeting. 17+1 cooperation follows widely accepted international rules, market principles and EU standards. China sincerely welcomes European countries and the EU to engage in 17+1 cooperation, in pursuit of common prosperity and progress.

Kanani: Thank you, Ambassador. Can I just now, as we conclude this conversation, refer to the major issue as you started with: the pandemic and economic recovery? It'll be interesting to hear from you. China has been known for long-term planning. It's one of the only economies, alongside India, that's done better in the past 8 months than anywhere else in the world. There's something about your economic planning and recovery and your long-term planning that others may wish to learn from. But from your perspective, Ambassador, tell us, how are you reconciling the pandemic recovery with long term economic planning? What can others learn from your approach?

Zhang: China's GDP grew by 2.3% in 2020, crossing the mark of 100 trillion yuan, or 13 trillion euros for the first time. China's economy achieved a V-shaped recovery in 2020, from the 6.8% contraction in the first quarter to the 6.5% growth in the fourth quarter.

This is not easy by any means, especially against the backdrop of the COVID-19, severe global economic recession and rising unilateralism and protectionism. Such achievement would not have been possible without the hard work and solidarity of the 1.4 billion Chinese people, and our efforts to balance epidemic containment and economic and social development. This is also attributable to China's cooperation with Europe and other global partners.

In 2020, China's trade in goods exceeded 4 trillion euros, up by 1.9% from the previous year. China's trade in goods with the EU was nearly 600 billion euros, up by 5.3%, more than double the average growth rate of China's trade with its global partners. China is now the EU's largest trading partner. This fully speaks to the strong resilience and importance of China-EU economic and trade cooperation.

What China has achieved is good news not only for China but also for the whole world. For years, China has contributed to over 30% of global growth. China's recovery is a source of global confidence. I am glad to see that many European companies in China have regained profits thanks to the growth of the Chinese market.

You mentioned China's long-term economic planning. Indeed, making long-term planning is an important way of governance in China. Despite the impact of COVID-19, we managed to meet the major targets set in the 13th

five-year plan, and most notably, we have eliminated extreme poverty in China as scheduled. This year, we will kick-start the 14th five-year plan and enter a new phase in development. We have also set out long-range objectives through 2035. The watchwords include green, low-carbon, innovation, opening-up at a higher level, and expansion of domestic consumption. You may find many commonalities between Chinese and EU visions and approaches. This means enormous opportunities for cooperation, which must be seized and translated into actions.

China and the EU follow different paths of development, as a result of different historical, cultural, political and development backgrounds. The two sides could learn from each other. But it does not necessarily mean that one's experience would work perfectly well in the other. What matters is to find a way that suits one's own national conditions. Mr. Good is not necessarily Mr. Right, while Mr. Right is for sure Mr. Good. The EU has put forward an ambitious recovery program. China hopes to see an early delivery of the program. I believe that as long as China and the EU look at each other and handle differences in a spirit of equality, mutual respect and openness, we could develop and prosper together through cooperation and healthy competition, and find the right approach to relations between major powers.

Kanani: Thank you very much, Ambassador. Clearly, at Friends of Europe, we felt that for some time that when we think about global relations, not only geopolitics but in terms of trade and industry markets, the EU ought to be looking more to the east rather than the west, because of the demographic changes, the market progress of India, China and other countries in the east. But also there is something about creating a greater balance in the globe in terms of different perspectives and an approach to multiculturalism. What you've said has given us some clues as to what we should be thinking about in future relations. The 14th (Five-Year) Plan, as you said, the openness, mutuality, digital, green, etc, are key areas for recovery. What were the last messages you'd like to leave this conversation, Zhang? Because you know the headlines at the moment, there's a whole debacle about vaccines. You've had an incredible program of vaccines. At the moment, Europe is struggling with some of the companies, commercial companies, and Europe continues to be locked down as with the United States. Any messages from you in relation to (it)? What can you say about vaccines rollout and what we can learn, but also what you can contribute, and any other

wider messages which that many people will be listening to this conversation to have clues of the future relationship between the EU and China, and the EU and the US.

Zhang: I believe that the vaccine is a very significant tool for the international community to fight against the epidemic. And for this area, in the international community, we are supposed to strengthen our cooperation. We have to work in solidarity and to help make the vaccine as effective as possible. This is the right way to fight against the pandemic. Last but not least, I wish to thank Friends of Europe and Mr. Kanani for inviting me here. I enjoy the conversation very much. As you may know, we in China are going to start the Year of Ox in a few weeks, a symbol of hard work and prosperity. Let's work hard together in this new year for a more prosperous China-EU relationship. Thank you.

Kanani: Ambassador, thank you very much. That was really helpful. Thank you for spending the time with me. These are conversations which are very important to have. I hope that, as you said, you've enjoyed it, but also it's important for those who are going to watch, listening to this, watching this, to have your voice heard in terms of your perspective, and on a range of issues about China and the globe. I think everyone will be looking forward to what changes, develops and improves in the coming years. But you've given us some insights as to your commitment and vision of how this relationship should develop and improve over the years to come and, as you say, has stood to the test of time as represented in the comprehensive agreement on investment. Thank you for your time. And we wish you well and look forward to engaging with you again perhaps later in the year. Thank you very much.

Zhang: Thank you.

Kanani: I would want to thank all our viewers. I hope you enjoyed this particular version of our strategic conversation. Go to our website, visit it and see the next set of conversations we have planned, but also a range of events that we have in the pipeline for you to engage in debate and connect on issues that matter to the world and in Europe. Thank you very much. My name's Dharmendra Kanani, director of Friends of Europe and look forward to seeing you again.

Ambassador Zhang Ming Takes a Joint Interview with Portuguese Media

2021/02/03

On 29 January 2021, Ambassador Zhang Ming, Head of the Chinese Mission to the EU, took an online interview with Portuguese media including Público, RTP TV, Euronews, Lusa, Radio Antena 1, and TSF-Rádio Notícias. The following is the transcript:

Ambassador Zhang Ming' s opening remarks:

It is a great pleasure to speak to journalists from Portuguese media. Before taking your questions, please allow me to say a few words on China-EU relations.

No doubt, China-EU relations are of crucial importance. 2020 was not an ordinary year. With great difficulties in the international environment and the widespread of COVID-19, all countries and individuals are severely affected, coming under huge pressure and challenges. China-EU relations are no exception. Yet looking back, we are proud to find that 2020 saw a strong growth of China-EU relations. High-level exchanges were more frequent than ever. President Xi Jinping had three video meetings with EU leaders and had nearly 30 phone calls or video meetings with European leaders including President de Sousa. Last Wednesday, President Xi Jinping sent a congratulatory message to President de Sousa on his reelection. China and the EU held the 22nd annual summit and launched new high-level dialogues in green and digital fields. Next Monday, Vice Premier Han Zheng and EVP Frans Timmermans will co-chair the first high-level dialogue on environment and climate change. The two sides formally signed the Geographical Indications Agreement. Yesterday, China notified the European Commission of its completion of internal procedures on the GI agreement, which is expected to enter into force on March 1. The two sides concluded the investment agreement negotiations as scheduled. We joined forces in upholding multilateralism, fighting the COVID-19, promoting economic recovery, and addressing global challenges.

A quote by Charles Dickens seems to fit in the context: "It was the best of times; it was the worst of times". China-EU relations are advancing against all odds. This reflects what we Chinese believe, that is, from a crisis opportunities arise. To turn a crisis into opportunities, three things are crucial. First, China and the EU have shared interests and need each other as partners. Second, China and the EU are well aware of their shared responsibilities in safeguarding world peace and prosperity, promoting healthy globalization, upholding multilateralism, and improving global governance. Third, China and the EU have a shared commitment to cooperation and dialogue. We commit to promoting cooperation, resolving or managing differences through dialogue rather than confrontation. We reject any destructive attempt to poison international relations or to preach for the so-called new Cold War.

This year, China and the EU have a rich agenda. Challenges won't fall short, but opportunities feature even more prominently. The two sides will make sustained efforts to promote high-level exchanges, push for the follow-up procedures of the investment agreement, coordinate COVID-19 response on both health and economic fronts, step up green and digital cooperation, and strengthen multilateral governance, in order to keep the good momentum of their relations. This serves the interests of China and the EU and contributes to global stability and prosperity.

Público: Thank you very much. I have three questions if I may. One is regarding this year's agenda. It has to do with the investment agreement. I was wondering if you have any expectations on the ratification of such an agreement? Do you think that this is something that the Portuguese presidency will be able to accomplish? Or do you expect that this will be a longer process? Somewhat related to that is I would like to have your comment on the European discussion about strategic autonomy. Do you think that the concept might push Europe towards a more protectionist stance with regard to global competition in trade? The final one is about the climate change and climate neutrality commitments that China also announced following the European one. So as I understand, China has now committed to climate neutrality in 2060. Can you confirm and what are going to be in those negotiations with Executive Vice-President Frans Timmermans? Thank you.

Zhang Ming: On December 30 last year, Chinese and EU leaders jointly announced the conclusion of the negotiations of the investment agreement. The negotiation had lasted for about 7 years. I have noticed that this agreement has drawn a lot of attention not only from China and the EU but also from other parts of the world. There's a good reason for such a high-level attention given to this agreement. After all, it is of great significance.

This agreement is significant in three aspects. First and foremost, it will give a strong boost to China-EU cooperation. Secondly, it contributes to global economic recovery and the healthy development of economic globalization. Thirdly, it contributes to China's reform and opening-up.

Upon ratification and entry into force of this agreement, as President Xi Jinping said to EU leaders, it will widen market access, improve business environment, strengthen institutional safeguards and create a brighter future for cooperation for both Chinese and EU investors.

From January 1 of this year, Portugal took over the EU rotating presidency. I believe during its presidency, there will be some steps forward in terms of ratification of this investment agreement. Now we have already concluded the negotiation of the investment agreement and we have the initial text in front of us. We are going to go through the legal scrubbing and translation of the text. Then, the two sides are expected to sign the agreement after receiving the relevant mandate. After that, the agreement will be submitted for ratification.

On strategic autonomy, I noticed that it is prominently on the agenda of this EU leadership. Since day one of China-EU diplomatic ties, which were established 45 years ago, China's position and approach to the EU have remained consistent. We always believe that the EU is a major actor in the international landscape and an important pole in this multipolar world. Based on such an approach, we do not think that strategic autonomy is a surprising concept. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China, notably since the launch of reform and opening up, China has remained firmly committed to a peaceful development path and an independent foreign policy of peace. So China fully understands the concept of strategic autonomy.

China and the EU are two major forces, markets, and civilizations. China-EU relationship has a value of its own. It is not and it should not be attached to any

other state-to-state relations. The investment agreement is a good example in this regard. For China and the EU, which are comprehensive strategic partners, reaching a bilateral investment agreement after many years of earnest negotiations is something not surprising and something reasonable. It reflects the spirit of independence. China fully respects the EU' s strategic economy.

As you've rightly pointed out, last September, President Xi Jinping announced that China will strive to peak its carbon emissions by 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality by 2060. At the Climate Ambition Summit held at the end of last year, President Xi Jinping announced further commitments to 2030. He said that China will lower its carbon emissions per unit of GDP by over 65% from the level of 2005, increase the share of non-fossil fuels in primary energy consumption to around 25%, increase the forest stock volume by 6 billion cubic meters from 2005, and bring its total installed capacity of wind and solar power to over 1.2 billion kilowatts.

This is a clear roadmap towards carbon emissions peaking target we have set for 2030. This speaks to China's commitment to working together with the EU and other global partners in addressing climate change. It reflects our firm support for multilateralism.

Since we have made the commitment, we mean it and we will deliver on it. It requires teamwork to address climate change. Every team member has to contribute its due share. We need to work together to develop necessary technologies, increase input to renewable energy, and plant more trees. All team members need to join forces.

To address climate change, we also need to bear in mind the importance of promoting economic and social development, and improving people's livelihoods. There needs to be the right balance between addressing climate change and improving people's livelihoods. It is particularly true for less developed countries. In these countries, there is still a huge room for improvement to elevate people's living standards. So we must make sure that climate actions will contribute to the improvement of people's well-being rather than the opposite. That is why the Common But Differentiated Responsibility principle is of particular importance in taking climate actions.

Starting from the 1990s, China has gradually increased its input in environmental protection and ever since then, the EU has also started the relevant cooperation projects in China. The relevant projects undertaken by the EU contribute to China's energy conservation and emissions reduction. Two years ago, in some sectors in China, we started applying the emissions trading system, which, to some degree, was attributable to the support of the EU partners. We are grateful for what the EU had done to us and we are glad that green corporation has gradually become a key pillar for China-EU relations.

As I said in my opening remarks, last year Chinese and EU leaders decided to launch the high-level dialogue on environment and climate change. Next Monday, we are going to have the first round of this dialogue. The EU is working on the Green Deal. This year, China will kick-start its 14th Five-Year Plan, in which green development is a key feature.

There are many commonalities between the two initiatives. We have a shared philosophy in terms of green development. We are going to turn these shared commitments into concrete actions in such areas as environment-friendly technologies, circular economy, green and clean energy, and sustainable finance.

The UN Biodiversity Conference was originally scheduled for last year in Kunming. But due to the COVID-19, it has been postponed to this year. A similar case goes to Glasgow Conference as well, and it will be held in the UK in November this year. So, it is up to China and the EU to join forces to make good coordination in preparations for the two conferences to ensure that these conferences will be productive and fruitful.

RTP TV: First, I would like you to comment on one of the priorities of the Portuguese presidency. That's related to improving the relations between the European Union and India and seeking to reduce the bloc's dependence on China. You cited a good example of this. That was the business on medical equipment at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. The second question is how do you foresee the future relations between the European Union and China with the new American Administration? Because it seems that Brussels intends to turn itself to the Atlantic side. Can this have a negative impact on EU-China relations?

Zhang Ming: EU is an important power in the international community. We fully respect its foreign policy. We're also happy to see more progress and development for relations between the EU and other members of the international community, including the EU-India relationship. India is an emerging power. It has achieved very promising progress in the past decades. It's also an immediate neighbor of China. We attach great importance to the bilateral relationship between China and India. I don't think the development of any bilateral relationship should mean reducing cooperation with a third party. We have witnessed globalization for decades. The world has benefited from globalization. Due to globalization, the members of the international community become more dependent on each other. This is one of the significant features of today's world. We are supposed to continue our way, progress on the path of globalization, and strengthen cooperation among all members of the international community. At the same time, maybe all members will depend more on each other. That's why we advocate the community with a shared future for mankind. This is our future. All the people, all the countries in the world, we share one future. We cannot try the so-called decoupling or separating one from the other. I don't think it's the right way. The keyword is link. To link each other will strengthen our capability to win the future, the shared future.

China has congratulated President Joe Biden on his inauguration. We are expecting to work together with the new US administration in a spirit of non-confrontation, non-conflict, mutual respect, and win-win cooperation, focusing on cooperation instead of confrontation to manage differences between the two sides, and bring the China-US relationship back to a healthy and stable development path.

In the past years, for reasons well-known, the China-US relationship, EU-US relationship, and some other bilateral relationships have gone through difficulties. Both China and the EU are victims of unilateralism and protectionism. Both of us believe in multilateralism and stick to openness in the international trade system. We noticed that the United States has made the decision to come back to the Paris Agreement and the WHO. It's good news. Now we are facing severe challenges in the world and at the same time great opportunities. Just as President Xi Jinping said at the Davos Forum a couple of days ago, a divided world cannot help humanity face the challenges. Confrontation will lead humanity to a dead end. Anyway, the international community is supposed to

work together in solidarity and cooperate closely for their shared future.

Both China and the EU are two major forces for world peace. We are two big markets for growth and development. We represent the two great civilizations for the progress of human beings. As comprehensive strategic partners, the China-EU relationship has stood the test of the times and changes of the international situation. I think this relationship enjoys its own independent value. It should not be attached to any other major power relationship. I personally have full confidence in the future of the steady development of the China-EU relationship. Just now we talked about strategic autonomy. I hope the EU will stick to the spirit and develop strategic autonomy to guide its foreign relations with major countries in the world, including China, for the sake of the stability and progress of our world.

Euronews: You mentioned that the investment agreement contributes to the global economic recovery and it's also a show of China's commitments to reforms and openness. Could you give us some concrete examples of economic business sectors that will have more access to European actors, and sectors where the Chinese government would probably ease the state aid? In terms of the 5G program, the European Union is still not convinced that the Chinese technology would be in its best interests. What is your point of view?

Zhang Ming: The investment agreement is a high-standard bilateral document, which covers several aspects. First, on market access as you mentioned, it involves the concrete interests of both sides, and this topic is cared most by industries and businesses. Since we announced the conclusion of the negotiations, I have been closely following the response of EU friends from different sectors to this agreement and I have hardly heard any negative comments on market access. According to this agreement, for the first time, China commits to a negative-list approach to all economic sectors including the services sectors. China will further open up automobile, healthcare, finance, cloud services, and other sectors in which the EU side is highly interested. These are major steps to be taken by China with strong determination. According to the agreement, both sides commit to lifting or removing restrictions on enterprises in most sectors regarding their R&D activities and export performance in order to refrain from an impact on the establishment and

operation of these companies.

The second major aspect of the agreement is the level playing field. The agreement is aligned with international high-standard economic and trade rules and has set out provisions and rules on state-owned enterprises, subsidy transparency, transfer of technology, and regulatory enforcement. These rules aim to ensure that Chinese and EU investors while operating in the other's market could enjoy a high-level and law-based business environment.

The third major aspect of the agreement is sustainable development. After more than 40 years of reform and opening-up, China has entered a new stage of development. We practice a new philosophy of development and take a people-centered approach to development. We are attaching increasing importance to the protection of the environment and labor rights. We have noticed that a key feature of the new-generation international economic and trade agreements is the inclusion of environment and labor issues related to trade and investment. Based on this consideration, the China-EU investment agreement sets out a specialized chapter on environmental and labor issues related to investment.

These are the three major parts of the agreement. The European Commission has already published the main body of the text. You could take a closer look for more information.

On 5G, for the past 30 years, Chinese ICT companies have come a long way in the development of digital technologies. That would not be possible without close cooperation with other global partners based on international rules. Experience has taught us that economic, social and technological development would not be possible without multilateralism and international cooperation. When we talk about Chinese companies, Huawei, an excellent private enterprise, always comes to our mind first. It has a wide network of global partnerships, including here in Europe, and gains a good reputation in the world. It has had over 20 years of presence in the European markets. Unfortunately, starting from about 2 years ago, there has been increasing discrediting and criticism on this company on the grounds of security. Yet people who criticize the company can't come up with any solid evidence to support their allegations.

Increasingly, cybersecurity has become a shared concern for the whole international community, be it Europe, China, Africa, or Latin America. To safeguard security, some countries resort to the law of the jungle by trying to bring down other countries' companies. However, in my view, the only right approach is international cooperation.

On 5G, I could observe two wrong tendencies. The first one is the willful destruction of rules. Certain countries are making an issue of security. They have listed Chinese companies as the so-called "high-risk suppliers" or directly excluded Chinese companies from their 5G markets. Yet, as I said earlier, they have not come up with any concrete evidence nor do they have any clear criteria for the so-called "high-risk suppliers". To treat a company differently simply because of its country of origin is nothing but a typical act of discrimination and protectionism. It does not comply with the market principles of fairness and openness. It is not tenable legally.

The second wrong tendency I could observe on 5G is to disregard laws governing market operations and technological development. 5G is an outcome of international cooperation. Its industrial and supply chains are formulated in accordance with laws governing market operations and technological development. Any politically-driven or artificial attempt to distort 5G supply chains or exclude technologically advanced companies would only delay 5G deployment and application, hurt the interests of various parties, including suppliers, operators and consumers, and eventually choking market competition and innovation.

At the end of the day, it is not about the rights and interests of a certain company. It is about market order and principles. I noticed a recent statement made by the European Competitive Telecommunication Association, which denounced any ban on 5G suppliers from a certain country for geopolitical reasons. A report by Oxford University pointed out that in 2019 Huawei contributed 16.4 billion euros in economic benefits to Europe and supported 224,300 jobs here in Europe. These are facts and sensible voices. We hope that the EU institutions and the member states will listen carefully to the voices of the academic and business circles, respect market rules, and fairly treat countries from all over the world.

As I said earlier, the issue we're discussing now is not only about the interests of a certain company or the employment here in Europe. I am worried about the fact that rules are being disregarded or even destroyed. People often say that Europe is a role model in formulating and observing rules. I hope that is the case. If we compare an individual or company breaking rules to the polluter of a river, then the breach of rules by European governments and the EU institutions could be seen as polluting the very source of the river.

In a market economy, fairness and rules are of paramount importance. With sense and wisdom, we could clearly see what is actually going on in the sector of 5G. We cannot help but worry that an avalanche could eventually happen due to the pouring of snowflakes.

5G is not a geopolitical tool, but a platform for mutually beneficial cooperation. To safeguard 5G security, we need cooperation. We need a constructive not a destructive approach. China and the EU have decided to launch the High-level Digital Dialogue. We hope that this mechanism could play a positive role in helping us dispel disturbances and deepening cooperation on 5G and other digital technologies. We noticed that at the end of last year, the EU published a communication on the future transatlantic relations, which said that the EU and the US need to step up cooperation on 5G and the related sectors. We hope such cooperation observes international rules, respects laws governing market and technological development and does not target any third party.

Lusa: I would like to go back to the investment agreement. I would like to know what's your expectation regarding the timetable. How do you think this agreement can benefit the investment in Portugal from Chinese companies or either way from Portuguese companies in China, for example. Do you foresee more investment in Portugal due to this agreement and also talking about Portugal specifically? What's your opinion about these advisers from the European Union regarding the elimination of some investment programs such as golden visas and that type of investment programs that for example will be really used for Chinese investors in Portugal.

Zhang Ming: On the investment agreement timetable, as I explained at the very beginning, we are going to have the legal scrubbing and translation of the text. This is not about restarting the negotiation. We are just sorting out and finalizing

the details. After that, we will find the right time through consultation to sign this agreement. We hope that Portugal, as the holder of the rotating presidency, could give a push to teams from both sides. The ideal situation is that the agreement will be formally ratified by the end of this year or at the beginning of next year, and then the agreement will enter into force.

China and Portugal are very good and close partners. Portugal, as an EU member state, will benefit from the investment agreement. The agreement will further facilitate the Chinese and EU investors' access to the other's markets. There will be more EU investment flowing into China and there will be more Chinese FDI flowing into the EU including Portugal.

Regarding the golden visa issue, this is an internal matter of the EU. There are some investors who are trying to gain residence permits or visas through investment. This is not something encouraged by the Chinese government.

Closing remarks of Ambassador Zhang Ming:

Thank you, dear friends. I'm very happy to have the chance to communicate with you. And your country is a very close friend with China. Of course, Portugal was not the first European country to establish diplomatic ties with my country. Maybe it's one of the latest European countries to set up ties with China. But since the establishment of the ties in the late 1970s, the bilateral relationship between our two countries has been developing smoothly and fast. Now we can see very close cooperation between our two countries. I think we can consider China-Portugal relationship as a model. I think the secret is mutual respect. Portugal shows great respect for China and China shows great respect for Portugal. Both of us never intervene in the internal affairs of the other. I think this is one of the secrets and I do hope we'll continue to promote our cooperation for the sake of our two countries and two peoples.

In two weeks, we are going to have our lunar new year, the Spring Festival. The new year will be the year of ox, which represents hard work and prosperity. Let's work hard for the prosperity of Portugal, China, and all the international community. Now the COVID-19 is still serious and I hope you will take good care of yourselves, your families, and your colleagues. All the best.

<http://www.chinamission.be/eng/mh/t1850831.htm>

Allocution de l'Ambassadeur LU Shaye au Forum sur la coopération Chine-UE dans le nouveau contexte

2021/01/22

Le 21 janvier 2021, l'Ambassade de Chine en France et The Bridge Tank ont co-organisé le Forum sur la coopération Chine-UE dans le nouveau contexte. Voici l'allocution de l'Ambassadeur Lu Shaye :

Monsieur le Premier Ministre Jean-Pierre Raffarin,
Madame la Directrice générale Irina Bokova,
Monsieur le Ministre François Loos,
Madame l'Ambassadeur Sylvie Bermann,
Monsieur le Président Joël Ruet,
Chers Amis,

Bonjour à tous. Bienvenue au Forum sur la coopération Chine-UE dans le nouveau contexte. C'est notre première rencontre « en nuage » en 2021. Même si le Jour de l'An est déjà passé, je tiens à souhaiter à tous une « Bonne Année » ! Je vous remercie sincèrement pour l'intérêt que vous portez depuis de longues années aux relations Chine-France et Chine-Europe, et pour votre soutien à l'ambassade de Chine en France et à moi-même. En ce début d'année, j'aurais bien voulu vous rencontrer en face à face. Malheureusement, la pandémie nous en empêche. Il est tout de même très nécessaire pour nous de mener un « brainstorming », ou un « remue-méninges » en bon français, sous forme de visioconférence. En juin dernier, nous avons tenu avec des groupes de réflexion une visioconférence très enrichissante. Aujourd'hui, je voudrais partager avec vous mes réflexions sur trois questions liées à la coopération Chine-UE dans le nouveau contexte : Comment voir le nouveau contexte ? Pourquoi la Chine et l'UE devraient-elles coopérer ? Et comment renforcer notre coopération ?

Chers Amis,

Permettez-moi d'abord d'exposer ma réflexion sur ce qu'est le « nouveau contexte ». L'un des points les plus marquants de ce nouveau contexte est que le monde est entré dans une période de bouleversements et de transformation, avec des incertitudes et des instabilités considérablement accrues. D'un point de vue global, le monde est dans un état chaotique. La pandémie continue de se propager et bon nombre de pays sont obligés d'appliquer des mesures sanitaires plus strictes, voire le confinement. Les principales organisations faisant autorité prévoient une contraction de l'économie mondiale d'environ 4,4% pour 2020. Les difficultés de la gouvernance mondiale s'accroissent. L'unilatéralisme, le protectionnisme et la politique du plus fort entravent la coopération internationale. Dans le même temps, plusieurs vaccins ont été mis en service dans un délai record et apportent de l'espoir à l'humanité pour vaincre la COVID-19. Les technologies numériques progressent à pas de géant, contribuant à la reprise des activités économiques. La « diplomatie en nuage », le « travail à distance » et les « visioconférences » sont devenus quotidiens. La pandémie a fait mieux comprendre aux peuples du monde combien la solidarité est nécessaire et combien il faut bâtir une communauté de destins de l'humanité. L'humanité se trouve à nouveau à la croisée des chemins entre l'union et la division, entre l'ouverture et le repli, et entre la coopération et la confrontation. L'avenir de l'humanité dépend du choix de chacun de nous.

Du point de vue des relations entre grands pays, il est encore à observer dans quelle direction les Etats-Unis vont se diriger. J'ai remarqué que depuis novembre dernier, les relations entre l'Europe et les Etats-Unis sont devenues un sujet d'actualité brûlant. Beaucoup attendent avec impatience l'arrivée au pouvoir de Biden, dans l'espoir de retrouver le « bon vieux temps » des relations transatlantiques. Beaucoup d'autres estiment que Biden pourrait « prêter une oreille amicale et attentive » à l'Europe, mais serait incapable de lui « prêter main forte », ils ne sont pas sûrs si l'Europe et les Etats-Unis puissent aplanir leurs divergences. D'autres craignent que Biden n'adopte inévitablement une politique industrielle expansionniste afin de promouvoir la reprise économique et l'emploi aux Etats-Unis, ce qui pourrait exacerber la concurrence et les frictions économiques et commerciales entre l'Europe et les Etats-Unis. D'autres encore estiment que les problèmes entre l'Europe et les Etats-Unis ne datent pas de

Trump et ne disparaîtront pas avec l'arrivée de Biden. Ils préconisent que l'Europe ne doit pas mettre tous les œufs dans le même panier et devenir un « champ de bataille » entre grandes puissances, craignant que l'Europe n'arrive pas à se positionner entre la Chine et les Etats-Unis. Toutes ces opinions différentes sont déboussolantes. J'ai également observé qu'après les violences au Capitole, l'opinion publique européenne est sous le choc, et les commentaires sont nombreux dans les milieux politique, médiatique et intellectuel. On se préoccupe beaucoup de la polarisation des partis politiques, et aussi des conflits raciaux et des divisions sociales aux Etats-Unis, et on a peur que l'Europe ne soit impactée. Certains médias s'alarment en disant que tout le fondement de la démocratie occidentale tremble lorsque la démocratie américaine est en déclin. Le blocage de Trump par les réseaux sociaux a provoqué une secousse violente en Europe et suscité des débats vifs sur les limites de la liberté d'expression, la fragilité de l'Etat de droit et l'ingérence du capital dans la politique.

Les amis européens portent aussi un grand intérêt aux relations sino-américaines, qui arrivent aujourd'hui à un nouveau carrefour et pourraient faire face à de nouvelles fenêtres d'espoir. La politique américaine de la Chine est constante et claire. Peu importe qui est le Président américain, nous sommes disposés à développer une relation de non-conflit, de non-confrontation, de respect mutuel et de coopération gagnant-gagnant avec les Etats-Unis. Pourvu que les Etats-Unis sachent tirer les leçons en temps utile et travaillent véritablement dans le même sens avec la Chine, les deux pays sont tout à fait capables de résoudre les divergences et les différends par le dialogue, d'accroître les intérêts communs par la coopération, de trouver un modèle de relations entre grands pays qui bénéficie tant à la Chine, aux Etats-Unis, qu'au monde entier, et d'ouvrir des perspectives conformes à l'évolution de l'Histoire. J'ai la certitude que c'est aussi l'attente générale de la communauté internationale et dans l'intérêt de la Chine et des Etats-Unis, et aussi de l'Europe et du monde.

Chers Amis,

Je voudrais parler maintenant des raisons pour lesquelles la Chine et l'Europe doivent coopérer. La Chine et l'Europe ont mille raisons pour bien gérer leur

relation, et pas une seule raison pour la compromettre. Comme l'a souligné le Président Xi Jinping, la Chine et l'UE sont deux forces importantes, deux marchés immenses et deux civilisations brillantes dans le monde, et ce qu'elles préconisent, ce qu'elles combattent, ce qu'elles font ensemble revêtent une portée mondiale. La Chine et l'Europe n'ont pas de conflits d'intérêts fondamentaux et ne constituent pas une menace l'une pour l'autre. Elles ont beaucoup plus de coopération que de concurrence et beaucoup plus de terrains d'entente que de désaccords. La Chine et l'Europe devraient faire preuve du sens de responsabilité et déployer activement des efforts pour faire office de bâtisseurs coopératifs de la paix et du progrès du monde, et apporter plus de stabilité et de certitude à un monde turbulent et en mutation. En 2020, les échanges commerciaux entre la Chine et l'UE ont augmenté de 5,3%, à contre-courant de la conjoncture mondiale, pour atteindre 4,5 mille milliards de yuans, soit environ 649,5 milliards de dollars. La Chine est devenue pour la première fois le premier partenaire commercial de l'UE. A un moment historique, les dirigeants chinois et européens ont su prendre le pouls de notre temps, suivre la tendance générale dans le monde, tenir le cap de la coopération, se débarrasser de multiples entraves, et amener à la conclusion d'un accord d'investissement équilibré, de haut niveau et gagnant-gagnant. Cet accord montre la détermination et la confiance de la Chine dans la promotion d'une ouverture de haut niveau, offrira aux entreprises chinoises et européennes un plus grand accès au marché du partenaire, un meilleur environnement d'affaires, des garanties institutionnelles plus solides et des perspectives de coopération plus prometteuses. Il donnera aussi une nouvelle impulsion à la reprise de l'économie mondiale, renforcera la confiance de la communauté internationale dans la mondialisation économique et le libre-échange, et apportera une contribution importante à la construction d'une économie mondiale ouverte.

Cet accord est un magnifique cadeau de nouvel an aux peuples chinois, européens et de tous les pays du monde. Il est chaleureusement accueilli par les milieux d'affaires et les entrepreneurs européens. Cependant, j'ai également entendu des dissonances de la part d'un petit nombre d'hommes politiques, de think tanks et de médias en Europe.

Premièrement, il y a certains qui disent que l'Europe est « trop naïve ». Ils estiment que l'Europe n'aurait pas dû faire trop de concessions, renoncer à ses «

principes » et à ses valeurs et tolérer les positions intransigeantes de la Chine sur les questions liées au Xizang (Tibet), au Xinjiang, à Hong Kong et à Taiwan, en échange de l'accès au grand marché chinois. Accusant calomnieusement la Chine de pratiquer le « travail forcé » sur les Ouïghours, ils prétendent que l'Europe a « vendu un peu son âme avec cet accord ». Je sais que beaucoup d'Européens portent intérêt au développement du Xinjiang. Mais je constate aussi que certains sont apparemment induits en erreur et ont des malentendus et des préjugés sur le Xinjiang.

Le Xinjiang était autrefois une porte d'entrée en Chine des forces terroristes internationales. Du milieu des années 1990 à la première dizaine d'années du 21^e siècle, la région a connu des milliers d'attentats terroristes violents, faisant des dizaines de milliers de morts et blessés parmi la population innocente, y compris la population ouïghoure. Le gouvernement chinois doit évidemment assumer sa responsabilité de protéger son peuple en combattant résolument le terrorisme. Dans le même temps, nous sommes plus attentifs à la prévention du terrorisme et à la déradicalisation par des « politiques douces » comme l'éducation et la formation. Ce n'est absolument pas une atteinte aux droits de l'homme. Beaucoup de pays dans le monde, y compris des pays musulmans, ont adopté une approche similaire, comme en témoignent les centres de déradicalisation en France et les systèmes correctionnels communautaires aux Etats-Unis. Les droits de l'homme des stagiaires participant aux programmes d'éducation et de formation en Chine sont pleinement protégés. Ils ont acquis des compétences et trouvé des emplois. Le Xinjiang n'a pas connu d'attentat depuis 4 ans, la société est stable et prospère, et la population vit et travaille en paix.

Une fois le problème de sécurité réglé, le gouvernement de la région autonome du Xinjiang aide les habitants à trouver des emplois stables, à accroître les revenus en les mettant en lien avec les entreprises locales et aussi les entreprises en dehors de la région. Les travailleurs d'ethnies minoritaires choisissent librement leur emploi, signent des contrats de travail avec les entreprises de leur plein gré et dans le respect du principe de l'égalité, et sont rémunérés comme il faut. Je ne vois pas comment cela constitue du « travail forcé » ! Selon le Rapport d'enquête sur le travail et l'emploi des minorités ethniques au Xinjiang, 86,5% des habitants ruraux au Xinjiang sont prêts à

travailler en dehors de leur propre district.

La signature ou non par la Chine de la Convention de l'OIT sur l'abolition du travail forcé relève de la souveraineté de la Chine. Aucun pays n'a le droit d'y interférer. Si la Chine n'a pas signé la Convention, cela ne veut pas dire qu'il y a du « travail forcé » ou quelque chose à cacher en Chine, c'est parce que la Chine a des interrogations sur certaines notions et formulations de la Convention et qu'elle a besoin de les examiner attentivement. La loi chinoise interdit explicitement le travail forcé. Si les Etats-Unis, le Royaume-Uni et d'autres pays de Five Eyes font du tapage autour du prétendu « travail forcé » au Xinjiang et imposent des sanctions contre la Chine, ce n'est pas parce qu'ils se soucient de la population ouïghoure et des droits de l'homme. C'est parce qu'ils veulent diaboliser la Chine et en faire un ennemi public de l'humanité en inventant des mensonges et des fausses accusations, afin d'atteindre leurs objectifs de « découplage » et d'« isolement » de la Chine et d'étouffement de son développement. Leurs accusations ne s'appuient que sur des soi-disant « recherches » concoctées par l'Allemand Adrian Zenz et l'Institut australien de stratégie politique, qui sont, tout le monde le sait, soudoyés par les Américains, financés par le gouvernement américain, la CIA et les entreprises d'armement américaines et travaillent pour le compte des Etats-Unis. Leurs soi-disant « recherches » n'ont aucune valeur intellectuelle et aucune crédibilité. Si ces pays accusent calomnieusement la Chine du « génocide » contre la population ouïghoure, c'est parce qu'il semble à un larron que chacun lui est compagnon : une projection en miroir des crimes qu'ils ont commis dans leur histoire comme le massacre des indiens d'Amérique et la traite des Noirs. Ce qu'ils ont dit et fait à la Chine, c'est, au mieux, priver la population ouïghoure de ses droits au travail, à la vie et au bien-être, et au pire, priver tout le peuple chinois de son droit à la vie et au développement, ce serait un « génocide » contre le peuple chinois.

Deuxièmement, d'autres en Europe craignent que les Américains ne soient pas contents. Ayant peur qu'un accord d'investissement Chine-UE ne compromette l'alliance transatlantique, ils appellent à une meilleure coordination entre l'Europe et les Etats-Unis et à attendre l'arrivée au pouvoir de l'administration Biden pour affronter ensemble la Chine, sans quoi, selon eux, « en cas de conflit, l'UE sera seule face à la Chine ». Cette idée de se joindre aux Etats-Unis contre

la Chine est extrêmement myope. En Europe, les milieux politique, intellectuel et les principaux médias ont tous un sens aigu de l'autonomie stratégique, le président Macron et la chancelière Merkel y sont très attachés, ce que je partage entièrement. Mais il y a aussi, au sein de la société européenne, un fort courant profondément influencé par les Etats-Unis. Ces « atlantistes » font passer les intérêts américains avant les intérêts européens et agissent toujours selon la volonté des Etats-Unis. Le Ministre allemand des Affaires étrangères Heiko Maas a bien dit : « Nul besoin de parler de souveraineté européenne si cela doit signifier qu'à l'avenir nous n'agissons que selon la volonté de Washington ». Nous espérons que l'Europe pourra voir les choses à partir de ses propres intérêts et des intérêts communs de l'humanité, sur la base de la réalité des faits, plutôt que de faire siens les intérêts des Etats-Unis et considérer les adversaires des Etats-Unis comme ses propres adversaires. En plus, l'alliance entre l'Europe et les Etats-Unis ne date que de la fin de la Seconde Guerre mondiale. Elle est née de la guerre froide. Si l'on remonte plus loin dans l'histoire, on voit que l'Europe n'a jamais été alliée, mais un adversaire des Etats-Unis. Même au temps de l'alliance Euro-Américaine après la Seconde Guerre mondiale, les Etats-Unis n'ont jamais traité l'Europe comme un partenaire égal, mais comme un vassal. Ce n'est pas moi, mais un ami français qui le dit. Sur beaucoup de questions, en s'alignant sur les Etats-Unis, l'Europe ne devient qu'un faire-valoir et aide à réaliser les objectifs stratégiques des Etats-Unis au sacrifice des intérêts européens. Ce que je ne comprends tout simplement pas, c'est que si les Etats-Unis adoptent une « stratégie Indo-Pacifique », font des menaces militaires et de l'endiguement stratégique contre la Chine, pourquoi des pays européens envoient-ils des navires de guerre à des dizaines de milliers de kilomètres de chez eux, en Mer de Chine méridionale, pour montrer les muscles. Honnêtement, ces quelques navires des pays européens ne peuvent pas menacer la Chine, mais ils empoisonneront l'atmosphère de la coopération sino-européenne. Alors à quoi bon le faire ? L'Europe ne pourra devenir un pôle important dans un monde multipolaire et mieux défendre ses intérêts que si elle fait preuve d'une vraie autonomie stratégique.

Chers Amis,

Le dernier point que je voudrais aborder, c'est comment renforcer la coopération entre la Chine et l'Europe. L'Humanité est déjà entrée dans une ère de

communauté d'avenir partagé. Nous vivons dans un village planétaire interconnecté et interdépendant. Les différents pays ne peuvent plus se disputer entre eux, entrer dans des jeux à somme nulle, ni rester les bras croisés devant les malheurs des autres, s'en délecter, voire faire retomber les malheurs sur autrui. La Chine et l'Europe se trouvent toutes les deux dans une phase importante de développement. 2021 est l'année inaugurale de la mise en œuvre du 14e Plan quinquennal de la Chine. Elle travaillera, sur la base d'une analyse précise du nouveau stade de développement, à mettre en pratique de manière approfondie le nouveau concept de développement et à accélérer la création d'une nouvelle dynamique de développement, de sorte à marquer un bon début dans la perspective de faire de la Chine un pays socialiste moderne sur tous les plans. Nous développerons une ouverture de haut niveau sur l'extérieur et élargirons la coopération gagnant-gagnant avec le reste du monde. L'Europe a aussi devant elle de nombreuses tâches, comme la lutte contre l'épidémie, la reconstruction après l'épidémie, le développement vert, la transition numérique et l'intégration européenne. En 2020, le Président Xi Jinping a eu trois entretiens par visioconférence avec les dirigeants des institutions européennes et cinq entretiens téléphoniques avec le Président Macron, ce qui a joué un rôle de pilotage stratégique important pour le développement sain des relations sino-européennes. La Chine et l'Europe doivent mettre en application intégralement les consensus importants dégagés par nos dirigeants, aller dans la même direction, poursuivre sur cette lancée et travailler ensemble à créer de nouvelles opportunités et de nouvelles dynamiques.

D'abord, se respecter mutuellement. La Chine et l'Europe doivent respecter la voie de développement, les intérêts vitaux et les préoccupations majeures de part et d'autre, approfondir la connaissance mutuelle par un dialogue d'égal à égal, et renforcer la confiance mutuelle à travers une communication franche et sincère. En toute franchise, les dirigeants européens aiment critiquer la Chine sur les questions liées à Taiwan, au Xinjiang, au Xizang (Tibet), à Hong Kong et aux droits de l'homme. Les dirigeants chinois ne sont pas contents de constater un tel scénario et le peuple chinois ne peut pas l'accepter. Parce que ces questions relèvent des affaires intérieures chinoises et que beaucoup d'entre elles touchent aux intérêts vitaux de la Chine. D'autant plus que les critiques européennes sont souvent basées sur rien d'autre que des mensonges et désinformations, et donc tout à fait injustifiables. La Chine n'est jamais

intervenue dans les affaires intérieures des pays européens. Les Européens aiment parler de la « réciprocité ». Alors pourront-ils donc, dans l'esprit de la « réciprocité », se garder de s'ingérer dans les affaires intérieures chinoises ?

Deuxièmement, renforcer la coopération. Nous sommes appelés à coordonner nos efforts dans la lutte contre la COVID-19 et assurer la distribution équitable de vaccins comme bien public mondial, surtout au profit des pays en développement. Nous devons œuvrer ensemble pour la reprise économique, intensifier les communication et coordination en matière de politiques, construire une économie mondiale ouverte, et remettre en bonne marche les chaînes industrielles et d'approvisionnement mondiales le plus rapidement possible. Il nous faut également renforcer la synergie entre l'initiative « la Ceinture et la Route » et la Stratégie d'interconnexion eurasiatique de l'UE, approfondir les partenariats pour la coopération verte et la coopération numérique, finaliser dans les meilleurs délais la ratification de l'Accord d'investissement Chine-UE, et démarrer au plus tôt les études de faisabilité sur un accord de libre-échange Chine-UE.

Troisièmement, poursuivre fermement le multilatéralisme. La Chine souhaite, ensemble avec l'Europe, renforcer le dialogue et la coordination sur les plans bilatéral, régional et mondial, améliorer la gouvernance mondiale dans le respect du principe d'« amples consultations, contributions conjointes et bénéfiques partagés », défendre le système international axé sur les Nations Unies, construire un nouveau type de relations internationales centrées sur la coopération gagnant-gagnant et une communauté d'avenir partagé pour l'humanité, et soutenir les efforts de part et d'autre dans l'organisation des conférences internationales sur la biodiversité et le climat.

Quatrièmement, gérer adéquatement les divergences. La Chine et l'Europe doivent toujours garder à l'esprit l'aspect dominant de leurs relations que sont la coopération et le développement, travailler à dissiper les malentendus par le dialogue et à régler les problèmes épineux par le développement, gérer adéquatement les divergences, trouver les terrains d'entente par-delà les désaccords, accroître ce qui nous rapproche et réduire ce qui nous sépare. Nous espérons que l'Europe pourra maintenir sa vision stratégique, transcender les différences en termes de systèmes, ne pas regarder les choses à travers le

prisme idéologique, mais voir le développement de la Chine d'une façon d'égal à égal et dans une optique plus objective.

Chers Amis,

On peut toujours tirer des leçons du passé mais l'Histoire ne se reproduira pas. On dit en Chine que dans un bateau en marche, il est impossible de retrouver une épée en marquant d'une entaille l'endroit où elle est tombée dans l'eau. Le philosophe grec Héraclite disait : « on ne se baigne jamais deux fois dans le même fleuve ». Si la Chine n'a jamais commis d'erreurs aux conséquences irréversibles et qu'elle a obtenu de tels résultats de développement, c'est parce qu'elle se regarde toujours d'une manière objective, regarde le monde en tenant compte des enjeux de notre époque, se développe dans un esprit scientifique et se met fermement du bon côté de l'Histoire. Nous espérons que l'Europe pourra se mettre en phase avec le temps et voir la Chine telle qu'elle est. A cet égard, le rôle du milieu stratégique européen est crucial. Il ne faut pas refuser de regarder en face les aspects positifs de la Chine juste parce que l'on n'aime pas son système politique, et encore moins dénigrer la Chine pour complaire au « politiquement correct ». Si la perception de la Chine par l'Europe devient biaisée, elle commettra des erreurs aux conséquences irréversibles dans son jugement stratégique de la Chine. Ce sera nuisible aux relations sino-européennes et fatal pour l'avenir de l'Europe.

Chers Amis,

Vous êtes tous des experts chevronnés des questions stratégiques et internationales. J'ai hâte d'entendre vos opinions perspicaces et vos propositions constructives. Ensemble, travaillons pour un meilleur avenir de la coopération sino-européenne, un meilleur avenir de la Chine et de l'Europe. Je vous remercie.

<http://www.amb-chine.fr/fra/zfzj/t1847981.htm>

Why Europe gravitates away from US to Eastern power center: Martin Jacques

By Martin Jacques - GT Global Times

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What will happen to Europe? Will it continue with a broadly pro-American orientation, or will it pursue an increasingly independent position?

Either way, the consequences will be far-reaching. At the heart of the West lie the US and Europe. If Europe seeks a more autonomous role, then the West will be seriously weakened.

The end of the Cold War marked a major moment in US-Europe relations. Europe was no longer dependent on the US for its defense and ever since, slowly but remorselessly, a growing distance has opened up between them. This was accelerated by two key events – the US invasion of Iraq, opposed by most Europeans, and the Donald Trump phenomenon, which most

Europeans found beyond the pale.

President Joe Biden wants to mend the fences and return to something closer to the pre-Trump relationship. He may have some success because, unlike Trump, Biden will seek to befriend rather than castigate Europe. But there will be no simple return to the pre-Trump era: too much has happened, too much has changed.

A recent opinion poll by the European Council on Foreign Relations across 11 European countries reveals what can only be described as a sea-change in European attitudes in the post-Trump era. Six in 10 Europeans believe that the US political system is broken and that China will become a stronger power than the US in the next 10 years. A majority now want their country to remain neutral in any conflict between the US and China.

A majority of Germans believe that, after voting for Trump in 2016, Americans can no longer be trusted; across Europe likewise more people agreed than disagreed with this statement. The survey grouped the respondents into four categories. The smallest, 9 percent of the total, believed that the EU was broken and the US would bounce back. A second group, around 20 percent of the total, believed that both the US and the EU would continue to thrive. A third group, 29 percent of the total, thought that both the US and the EU were broken and declining. A fourth group, 35 percent of the total, believed that the EU was healthy, but the US was broken. The latter two groups, almost two-thirds of the total, expected that the US would soon be displaced by China.

There has clearly been a profound shift in European attitudes consequent upon the decline of the West since the 2008 financial crisis, the Trump presidency and the rise of China. These, we must remind ourselves, are very recent developments which have happened with remarkable speed. Far from reinforcing the Atlantic

alliance and the relationship with the US, their main impact on Europeans has been to weaken those bonds, elicit a growing acknowledgement that the world has changed profoundly and foster a belief that Europe needs to be more independent. Of course, these trends are still young and fluid. Many conflicting forces are at work with attitudes ebbing and flowing both within and between countries. Criticism of China has grown apace in the recent period in Europe, as it has in the US. But there is one fundamental difference. While the US is bent on defending its global primacy, Europe long ago abandoned any such pretensions, thereby greatly reducing the sources of friction and animosity between it and China in comparison with the US.

The survey reveals that by far the dominant trend is toward a more independent-minded Europe, a growing skepticism about the US and a sign of recognition that China will soon become the dominant power in the world. The European leader who most symbolizes this outlook, and has pioneered this way of thinking, is

German Chancellor Angela Merkel. The recently agreed EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment, very much in Merkel's image, is a powerful demonstration of the EU's willingness to pursue its own independent relationship with China rather than following the Americans.

The trend toward a growing distance between Europe and the US will be slow, tortuous, conflict-riddled, and painful. Europe has looked westward across the Atlantic ever since Christopher Columbus. It was European settlers who colonized Northeast America and subsequently established the US. The latter was a European creation which over time was to outperform its ancestral continent. If Europe colonized much of the world, the post-1945 world order was a Western creation, with the US the dominant partner and Europe very much a junior partner. In sum, an enormous historical, intellectual, political and cultural hinterland binds the US and Europe together. But we are now in new territory. American decline means that it has increasingly less to offer

Europe.

The gravitational pull of China, and Asia more generally, is drawing Europe eastward. Nothing illustrates this phenomenon better than the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative. Slowly but surely, bit by bit, Europe is becoming more and more involved – first the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, then Portugal, Greece and Italy, and others over time will in all likelihood follow. What drew Europe westward is now drawing it eastward: the centre of gravity of the global economy, once in the west, is now in the east.

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