

Panama ties 'have brought real benefits'

First visit to the Central American country by a Chinese head of state sees many consensuses

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Facts have proved, and will continue to prove, that it was absolutely right for China and Panama to establish diplomatic ties, as they have brought real benefits to the people of both sides, President Xi Jinping said on Dec 3.

Xi made the remark during talks with his Panamanian counterpart, Juan Carlos Varela, in Panama City. Xi's state visit to the Central American country was the first by a Chinese head of state. The two countries established diplomatic relations in June 2017.

Witnessed by the two presidents, China and Panama signed a series of cooperation documents. The two leaders spoke highly of the cooperation outcomes achieved since the establishment of diplomatic relations, and they found many points of consensus on promoting bilateral relations.

Over the past 18 months, the two presidents have paid visits to each other, and the two sides have deepened mutual political trust, Xi said.

No matter how the international situation changes, China's diplomatic policy of strengthening and developing relations with Panama will not change, Xi said, adding that China supports the efforts of the Panamanian government and people to safeguard their national security and stability, improve people's livelihoods and enhance the country's influence in international affairs.

China would like to make joint efforts with Panama to strengthen high-level exchanges and enhance cooperation between government bodies, legislative authorities and political parties, Xi said.

Xi said that China greatly appreciates Panama's support on issues related to China's core interests, including Taiwan. China upholds the principle of no interference in another country's internal affairs and respects Panama's sovereignty over the Panama Canal, Xi said.

Xi proposed that China and Panama should enhance the synergy of their development strategies and promote cooperation in such areas as finance, tourism, logistics and infrastructure.



President Xi Jinping and his wife, Peng Liyuan, together with Panamanian President Juan Carlos Varela and his wife, Lorena Castillo de Varela, visit the Cocoli locks at the expanded Panama Canal on Dec 3. CARLOS JASSO / REUTERS

Adding that China is the second-largest user of the Panama Canal, Xi said the two countries could streamline cargo transportation and help the canal play a bigger role in China's global trade.

China would like to initiate free trade negotiations with Panama on the basis of mutual respect and mutual benefit, Xi said, adding that China welcomes Panamanian exports, including seafood, meat and pineapples. The two countries should enhance people-to-people exchanges and exchanges between localities to encourage people to visit the other country, Xi said.

The two countries should also enhance coordination on global

affairs, jointly face the challenges of protectionism and unilateralism and better maintain the interests of developing countries, he added.

The Panamanian president welcomed Xi's historic state visit, saying that it will definitely promote friendship between people from both countries.

It is good to see that the consensuses reached by the two presidents are being implemented and that the two countries are carrying out projects in infrastructure and people-to-people exchanges, Varela said.

Panama firmly supports the one-China policy, he said, adding that Panama agrees with Xi's important thoughts, such as building a com-

munity with a shared future for mankind.

Panama supports the building of the Belt and Road, and it expects to enhance cooperation with China in investment, maritime transport and a free trade zone, Varela said, adding that Panama welcomes Chinese investors.

Varela said that Panama would like to negotiate with China on a free trade agreement as early as possible to promote trade between the two countries.

Panama-China cooperation will not only bring benefits to the people of both nations but also contribute to global peace and prosperity, he said.

Peng seeks to jointly fight AIDS

President's wife urges China, Panama to work together in combating the deadly disease and protecting the interests of women, children

By XU WEI
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Peng Liyuan, wife of President Xi Jinping, called for more cooperation between China and Panama on AIDS prevention, and women's and children's issues in a meeting on Dec 3 with Lorena Castillo de Varela, wife of Panama's President Juan Carlos Varela.

Peng, who was in Panama City, Panama, accompanying Xi for a state visit to the Central American country, said the Chinese government attaches great importance to the prevention and control of AIDS

and has devoted tremendous effort and achieved significant results.

China holds Panama's efforts in high regard, Peng said. She is the World Health Organization's goodwill ambassador for combating tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS.

China has also prioritized work related to women and children, and has made efforts to improve their level of health and education, she said.

As UNESCO special envoy for the advancement of girls' and women's education, Peng said she hoped the two nations can work together to contribute even more to the global cause of women and children.

Castillo de Varela, who is special advocate for AIDS in Latin America for the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, said she appreciates and admires the achievements of the Chinese government in AIDS prevention and control, as well as in protection of women's and children's interests. Panama is ready to work with China for more progress in those areas, she said.

After the meeting, Peng and Castillo de Varela showed their support for the global fight against AIDS as they posed for photos holding colorful paper butterflies, symbols of the zero discrimination campaign



Peng Liyuan, wife of President Xi Jinping, and Lorena Castillo de Varela, wife of Panamanian President Juan Carlos Varela, pose for a photo with paper butterflies on Dec 3 to show support for fighting HIV/AIDS. YAN YAN / XINHUA

launched by UNAIDS.

Peng also commended Castillo de Varela's participation in AIDS prevention, saying that China and Panama share common aspirations in eliminating HIV/AIDS.

She said she hopes that the two countries will step up bilateral cooperation and make steady efforts to help realize the UNAIDS-proposed goal of ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030.