

BRI to bolster Portugal relations

With key agreements signed, two countries' cooperation set to expand via the China-led Belt and Road Initiative

By AN BAIJIE in Lisbon, Portugal
anbaijie@chinadaily.com.cn

China and Portugal on Dec 5 signed cooperation documents covering such areas as trade, culture, science and the Belt and Road Initiative during President Xi Jinping's state visit.

The signing ceremony was witnessed by Xi and Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Costa. The two leaders met with reporters afterward.

The two nations signed a memorandum of understanding on jointly building the Belt and Road.

Xi told the reporters that he had sincere and fruitful talks with Costa, and the two leaders reached a wide range of consensuses. The visit has achieved numerous results and great success, Xi said.

The two countries will deepen cooperation in economy, trade, culture, education, tourism, science, sports and media, Xi said, adding that they will also expand maritime ties.

China and Portugal will be dedicated to improving the comprehensive strategic partnership between China and Europe, enhancing cooperation under multilateral frameworks such as the UN, and jointly safeguarding multilateralism and global trade, Xi said.

Xi also met with the president of Portugal's parliament, Eduardo Ferro Rodrigues, on Dec 5 before his meeting with the prime minister.

While meeting with Portuguese President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa on Dec 4, Xi called on the two countries to forge ahead with cooperation under the Belt and Road framework and facilitate connectivity.



President Xi Jinping and his wife, Peng Liyuan, stand with Portuguese President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa on Dec 4 at Belem Palace, the official presidential residence in Lisbon, Portugal. PEDRO NUNES / REUTERS

China and Portugal should strengthen multilateral coordination, enhance communication on major international and regional issues, and jointly safeguard multilateralism and free trade, Xi said.

He called on the two nations to advance high-level exchanges, to strengthen exchanges between the two governments, legislative bodies, political parties, local areas and non-governmental bodies, and to deepen political mutual trust.

The two countries should expand

pragmatic cooperation, enlarge and strengthen existing projects, enhance bilateral trade and create more cooperative aspects for further growth, Xi said.

Xi noted an ancient Chinese saying — "A partnership forged with the right approach defies geographical distance; it bonds better than glue and is stronger than metal and stone" — and added that this is the kind of good friends and partners the two countries are.

China firmly supports the integra-

tion process in Europe and hopes that Portugal continues to play an active role within the European Union to ensure the development of China-EU ties in the right direction, Xi said.

Rebelo de Sousa said both countries support multilateralism and oppose unilateralism, and both support free trade and oppose protectionism. Portugal looks forward to deepening exchanges and cooperation with China in such areas as economy, trade, finance and culture, he said.

Rebelo de Sousa hosted a grand ceremony for Xi before their talks, and both leaders met with reporters after their meeting. Xi also laid a wreath at the tomb of famous Portuguese poet Luis de Camoes inside Jeronimos Monastery in Lisbon.

On the evening of Dec 4, Xi and his wife, Peng Liyuan, together with the Portuguese president, visited an exhibition of cultural relics titled *The Forbidden City and the Maritime Silk Road*, which was on temporary display at a museum.

Beijing, Lisbon to strengthen economic links

Businesses from both sides willing to work together, give full play to advantages

By ZHONG NAN
zhongnan@chinadaily.com.cn

China is willing to work with Portugal to develop closer trade ties and expand cooperation in areas such as energy, finance, tourism, infrastructure and third-party markets, officials said.

The strong growth momentum in relations is boosted by businesses from both countries giving full play to their respective advantages in production capacity and technology collaboration, and maximizing potential in services and new energy industries under the Belt and Road Initiative,

said Sun Xiao, director of the multilateral cooperation department of the China Chamber of International Commerce. Bilateral trade grew 8 percent year-on-year to \$5 billion in the first 10 months, as China and Portugal have seen deeper economic cooperation in recent years, with steady growth in trade and investment, the Ministry of Commerce said.

China's imports from Portugal surged 12.5 percent to \$1.91 billion in the January-October period, according to official data.

Bilateral investment also enjoyed continuous growth. Portugal had invested \$210 million in 255 projects

in China as of the end of October, while Chinese companies had made about \$9 billion of investments in Portugal, covering areas including energy, water treatment, healthcare, insurance, telecommunication equipment and finance, said ministry spokesman Gao Feng.

Gao said businesses from both sides have also achieved success in cooperation projects in third-party countries, including energy projects in Brazil, Chile, Mozambique and Angola, and these have become a bright spot in bilateral economic ties.

China exports mainly electromechanical and chemical products, tex-

tiles, raw materials, precious metals, computers and household appliances to Portugal. In addition to tobacco, food and aquatic products, Portugal's shipments to China include plastics, rubber, transport equipment, cellulose pulp, paper and minerals.

As an important partner of the BRI and a founding member of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, Portugal can cooperate with China in various fields within the framework of the initiative, said Lu Ming, vice-dean of the Academy of China Council for the Promotion of International Trade.

Fang Qiuchen, president of the China International Contractors

Association, which helps Chinese construction companies expand their businesses overseas, suggested both countries should further explore third-party markets and multilateral cooperation with Portuguese-speaking countries, or PSCs, and deepen cooperation in areas like agriculture, infrastructure and auto manufacturing in Africa, Latin America and other regions.

Most PSCs such as Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique are at a critical stage of industrialization, hoping to improve infrastructure and upgrade their industrial structures, Fang said.