

Xi's New Year speech draws praise

President expresses China's resolve to accelerate reform, open its doors 'ever wider'

By **AN BAIJIE**
and **MO JINGXI** in Beijing,
CHEN WEIHUA in Brussels
and **PRIME SARMIENTO**
in Hong Kong

What could China bring to the world in 2019? The answer, for Frenchman Nicolas Escamez, might be more imports of beef from France, given China's strong measures to boost opening-up.

Escamez, manager of the International Business Development Department of Terrena Group, said his company has a "pretty ambitious" goal to develop business in China after the country lifted the ban on French beef imports in July.

"All the products launched online are sold out," he told China Daily while talking about the company's Chinese market. China banned beef imports from France in 2001 when the European country was hit by an outbreak of mad cow disease.

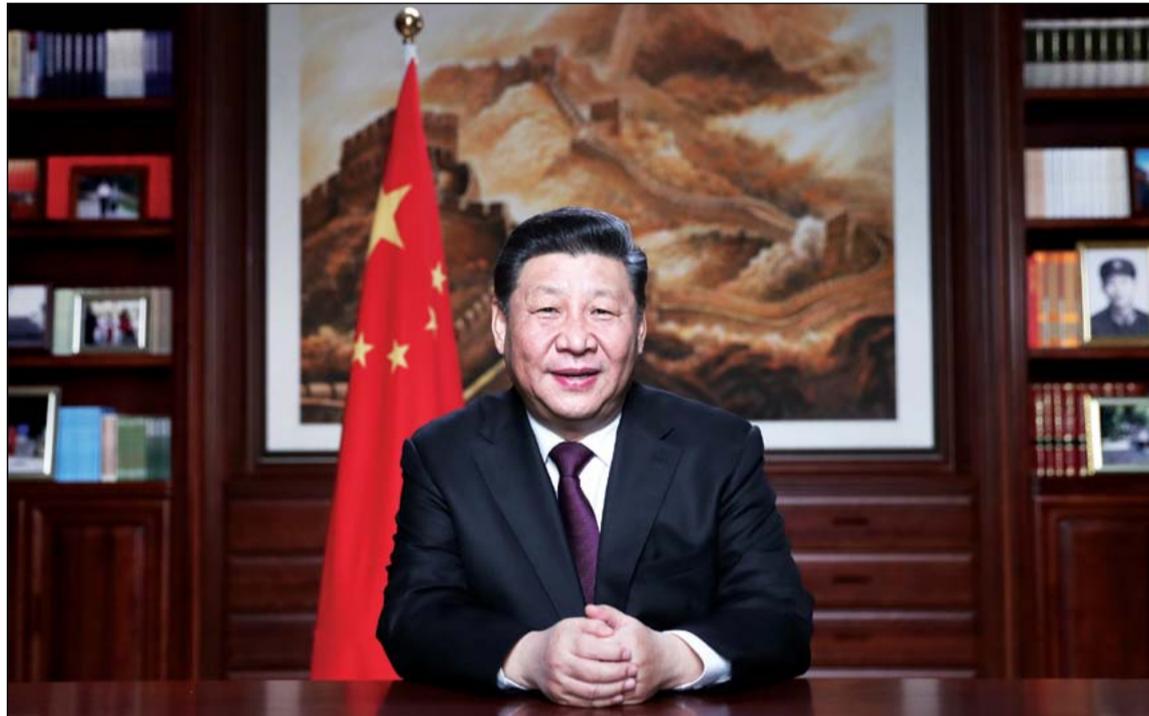
The lift of the ban on French beef imports is among China's increasing efforts to boost opening-up, as pledged by President Xi Jinping in recent years. In his New Year speech, Xi also reaffirmed his commitment to deepening reform and opening-up.

The world has seen China's acceleration of reform and opening-up as well as its determination to carry it forward, he said.

"China's reforms will never stop, and its doors will only open ever wider," Xi said in the speech delivered on New Year's Eve.

China will continue to push ahead the building of Belt and Road Initiative projects this year, and it will continue to advocate for building a community with a shared future for mankind, Xi said.

Last year marked the 40th anniversary of reform and opening-up,



President Xi Jinping delivers his New Year speech on Dec 31 in his office in Beijing. He said joint efforts are needed as China faces opportunities and challenges alike in 2019. JU PENG / XINHUA

and China launched more than 100 major reform measures and increased opening-up through such efforts as lowering import tariffs for vehicles, easing market access and facilitating investment.

China continued to reiterate its resolve to further deepen reform and expand opening-up in the new era by hosting the annual Boao Forum for Asia, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit in Qingdao, the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation's Beijing Summit and the first China International Import Expo.

"We put China's proposals on the table and made our voice heard at these and other diplomatic events," Xi said, adding that he had visited five continents last year and China's circle of friends had been enlarged.

At a New Year gathering held by

the country's top political advisory body on Dec 29, Xi greeted in his speech the "friends of all countries who have cared for and supported China's reform and opening-up and modernization building".

"We showed our resolve to carry through the cause of reform and opening-up in the new era," Xi said.

Ruan Zongze, executive vice-president of the China Institute of International Studies, said the president's New Year speech sent a clear signal of increasing opening-up, which has great significance for not only China but also the whole world.

"The Belt and Road Initiative and the proposal to build a community with a shared future for mankind are most important and most practical measures taken by China to boost opening-up," he said.

Luigi Gambardella, president of ChinaEU, a Brussels-based international association focused on internet, telecommunications and technology, said Xi's speech laid out ambitious proposals for international cooperation "in an era in which multilateral trust is becoming less".

"I am confident that a brave and determined China, committed to further implementing reforms and opening its doors wider to the outside world, can only be good news and a great source of inspiration for other nations," he said.

Aaron Rabena, program convener of the Manila-based foreign policy think tank Asia Pacific Pathways to Progress, said the speech "is a signal that we can continue to expect Chinese activism on the world stage and in global governance".

President Xi's speech briefs what China has achieved and what it intends to yet accomplish going forward, Rabena said. Xi has articulated that the Communist Party of China under his leadership has delivered on the domestic challenges of the country and has made great progress on technological breakthroughs.

Justino Calayca, research head of Manila-based brokerage Philstocks Financial, noted that it is obvious that China has made great strides in its economy in the last 40 years. China in fact has been a staple of conversation in the Philippines and everywhere.

Xi's speech implies that China will continue to play a bigger role on the global stage in 2019 and it will remain a focus of conversation everywhere, Calayca said.

Jon Taylor, a professor of political science of the University of St. Thomas in Houston in the United States, said: "I liked that Xi reiterated his pledge to cut taxes and fees in order to ease the burden on private enterprises".

Ivona Ladjevac, head of the regional center for the Belt and Road Initiative at the Institute of International Politics and Economics in Belgrade, Serbia, said the BRI already has created visible effects in different regions.

Li Haidong, a professor of US studies at China Foreign Affairs University, said China's cooperation with emerging markets and developing countries will be enhanced this year.

"President Xi's speech has shown clearly that China will keep opening up in the following decades and achieve common prosperity through embracing the world," he said.

Cecily Liu in London and Tang Ying in Nairobi contributed to this story.

Contact the writers at anbaijie@chinadaily.com.cn

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At the same time, the trend of peace, cooperation and development will continue to move forward and the deeper integration of China and the world will be unstoppable. We have every confidence in China's future.

In 2019, China will continue to advocate peace, development and cooperation for shared benefit, deepen international exchanges on all fronts and promote mutually beneficial cooperation with other countries. While firmly safeguarding our legitimate interests, we will continue to expand overlapping interests with all others to attain new progress in China's relations with the rest of the world.

Enhancing partnerships is an important component of China's diplomatic endeavors. This year, we will celebrate the 70th anniversary of our diplomatic relations with Russia and take the China-Russia comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination to a new height.

In the 40th anniversary year of our diplomatic relations with the United States, we will advance China-US relations defined by coordination, cooperation and stability, and strive for no conflict, no confrontation, mutual respect and win-win cooperation.

We will work with Europe to uphold multilateralism and safeguard international rules and order. We will strengthen practical coop-

eration with neighboring countries and other developing countries to deepen our shared interests.

Pursuing win-win opening-up is China's strategic choice. China will remain committed to the fundamental policy of opening-up.

We will not close our door of reform and opening-up or cease our efforts in promoting an open world economy. This year, we will host the second Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation and foster higher quality, standards and performance of the Belt and Road cooperation.

Upholding multilateralism is China's firm commitment. We will steadfastly uphold rules-based multilateralism and the UN-cen-

tered international system.

We will support the multilateral trading system, oppose protectionism and advance trade and investment liberalization and facilitation. We advocate international collaboration in advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the early entry into force and implementation of the Paris Agreement.

Promoting world peace is China's consistent objective. We will approach hot-spot issues in a Chinese way, and play our due role by proposing solutions to international and regional flashpoints including the Korean Peninsula issue, the Iranian nuclear issue and Afghanistan to serve the well-being of the people

in the relevant regions.

Countries make progress through exchanges and fall behind due to isolation. Standing at a new crossroads of history, China will continue to work with all other countries to withstand the test of change and turbulence, cultivate forces for peace and growth, and pursue a new form of international relations featuring mutual respect, fairness, justice and win-win cooperation and the building of a community with a shared future for mankind.

(Editor's Note: China Daily Global Edition was launched on Jan 2 and is published on weekdays. China Daily Global Weekly will be published every Friday.)