Celebrating 40 years of friendship and the beginnings of a new journey

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Upcoming EU-China summit will take stock of past achievements and map out future relationship, says Ambassador Yang Yanyi.

As we celebrate the 40th anniversary of China-EU diplomatic ties and the year of partnership in 2015, we are so pleased to witness a thriving bilateral relationship with a particularly strong impulse from Brussels, the home of the EU institutions.

Political exchanges have been frequent. In late March, European parliament president Martin Schulz visited China setting in motion the interactions between EU institutions and China for 2015.

On 6 May, president Xi Jinping, premier Li Keqiang and chairman Zhang Dejiang of the National People's Congress exchanged congratulatory messages with their EU counterparts to celebrate the day of establishment of China-EU diplomatic ties.
Shortly before that, state councillor Yang Jiechi and EU foreign affairs chief Federica Mogherini co-chaired the fifth China-EU high-level strategic dialogue.

Foreign minister Wang Yi and Mogherini jointly published an article entitled "At 40 we have no more doubts" - the EU and China are strategic partners for the long run. China and the EU held grand and warm 40th anniversary receptions in Beijing and Brussels respectively.

During the upcoming 17th China-EU summit, premier Li Keqiang and his European counterparts will discuss how to further promote bilateral cooperation.

Economic cooperation has been particularly dynamic. According to our statistics, China and the EU have begun implementing more than 70 per cent of the initiatives identified in the China-EU 2020 strategic agenda for cooperation.

Between January and April, the EU's investment in China increased by 20 per cent, while China's investment in the EU registered a phenomenal five-fold increase.

Additionally, negotiations for a bilateral investment treaty are making steady progress with a successful sixth round concluded recently with both sides reiterating their strong resolve to move the negotiation process forward.

Progress has been made in macroeconomic policy, mutual investment, infrastructure, finance, science, technology and innovation. Local cooperation through companies and regions in China and the EU has also increased.

The strong involvement of business leaders, regional representatives and academics in seminars and workshops on China-EU cooperation, in investment, IT and other areas stands testament to the solid interest the two sides have in increasing cooperation.

Cultural exchanges have been vibrant. Chinese culture is regularly showcased in Brussels through many events, to name just a few: the grand dance dramas Legend of the Sun and Maritime Silk Road, a Chinese film festival, a 40th anniversary photo exhibition, a China health Qigong week, 'China unlimited' creative contest, the second China-EU ping pong tournament, China day, and the "Who can give us peace" painting exhibition in commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the victory over fascism in world war two. Such opportunities are essential in sharing experiences and cementing our growing friendship.

Behind the dynamism of the China-EU partnership is our growing consensus and aspiration. As two global players, with massive markets and ancient civilisations, China and the EU share huge common interests which far outweigh any differences.

China and the EU both face a complex and fluid world, a profound realignment in the international
landscape as well as intertwined global challenges and hotspot issues.

Also, China is embracing the "new normal", while the EU is bracing for a new stage in its development. In this context, it is more important than ever for China and the EU to build on the past and chart the way forward to further bilateral relations and upgrade our cooperation.

By doing so, we can promote prosperity and stability in China, the European Union and the Eurasian continent, meet global challenges together and bring more order and justice to international systems.

This is precisely why we have such high expectations for the upcoming 17th China-EU summit. The summit will be the first meeting between the Chinese leader and the new EU leadership since president Xi Jinping's historic visit to the EU institutions last year.

It will mark a crucial milestone in this already eventful year, and set the tone for a new chapter in our cooperation.

At the summit, we will take stock of past achievements and map out our future course. It will be a key opportunity to deepen political trust, form synergies in our development agendas and scale up cooperation on trade, investment, finance, interconnectivity, ICT, scientific and technological innovation and the facilitation of people-to-people exchanges.

We also expect to increase coordination on major international affairs including safeguarding the victory of world war two, climate change and the post-2015 development agenda.

All in all, it will lend new impetus to our development, open new prospects for bilateral relations, give a strong boost to the China-EU comprehensive strategic partnership of peace, growth, reform and civilisation, and make new contributions to world peace and development.

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