

China's "circle of friends" enlarged in 2016: FM

By Wu Qimin, Wu Lejun and Zhao Cheng from People's Daily

Despite of a turbulent international environment, China, by comprehensively advancing a major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics, has become a stabilizer of world peace, said Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi when summing up the nation's diplomatic work in 2016.

Under the leadership of the CPC with President Xi Jinping as the core, China has led the way in global governance by holding a big picture in mind among the international turmoil, seeking development amid the world economic transformation and opening a new chapter in diplomacy, Wang said.

A more mature China has approached the center of international stage, becoming the stabilizer that injects positive energy in global turmoil, Wang added.

The international governance system has entered a key stage of transformation. Because the global balance of powers is witnessing historical changes, a reform on global governance system will be inevitable.

Against such backdrop, China took initiatives to push forward a fairer and reasonable global political and economic system by contributing Chinese solutions on global governance, Wang said.

The G20 Hangzhou Summit chaired by President Xi held in September has yielded a series of ground-breaking, exemplary and institutional achievements, said Wang, adding that it also effectively accelerated G20's process to transform from an emergency-response mechanism to a long-term governance one.

He stressed that at the APEC meeting held in Lima in November, President Xi not only sent China's voice to reject protectionism and seek more inclusive and all-benefited economic globalization, but also put forward Chinese solutions in building the Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP) and an open Asia-Pacific economy.

"China has maintained a more stable political relationship with major states, deepened practical cooperation, and saw an increase in the number of friends," the foreign minister underlined.

Hailing the progress of China's ties with major countries, Wang said that the conversation between President Xi and his US counterpart Barack Obama during the G20 Summit can be regarded as an in-depth strategic communication that enhances mutual trust and disperses doubts.

China and the US expressed the wishes to seek better ties in the telephone conversation between President Xi and President-elect Donald Trump, sending out a message about the smooth transition of China-US relationship in the future.

Wang admitted that the complicated China-US ties would definitely encounter uncertainties, but they will not hinder the development direction as a whole.

China and the US can only realize sustained cooperation, mutual benefits and win-win outcomes by respecting each other's core interests and major concerns, Wang emphasized, adding that it is the only right choice.

The heads of state of China and Russia held five meetings in 2016, elevating bilateral comprehensive strategic partnership to a higher level, said Wang.

The good-neighboring friendship between China and its neighboring countries has also been further reinforced, said Wang, citing China-Philippines ties as an instance.

According to Wang, the newly-elected Filipino President Rodrigo Duterte changed the previous confrontational attitudes towards China and took the initiative to improve bilateral relations. Duterte chose China as the destination of his first visit beyond the ASEAN and Xi welcomed him with great hospitality.

The transformed bilateral relationship has not only dispelled the dark cloud shrouding the two countries, but also cleared the way for deepening China-ASEAN cooperation, Wang said.

Such diplomatic advancement with neighboring countries occurred frequently this year. For example, President Xi's state visit to Cambodia made it clear that China values, cherishes and supports its old friend, which is good news for those countries that deal with China-related issues with justice and fairness.

It is the sacred mission of diplomats to protect national sovereignty, security and developmental interests, said Wang.

This year, China strongly refuted the so-called South China Sea arbitration initiated by the former Filipino administration, and pulled the issue back on right track of dialogue and consultations among parties directly concerned, which safeguarded national sovereignty, dignity and regional stability.

China has achieved a series of important progress in the construction of the "Belt and Road" initiative, which is deemed as an international public product for opening up and win-win cooperation, Wang added, saying that like a high-speed train, the initiative drives en-route countries towards a bright future and common prosperity.

Speaking of the diplomatic work in 2017, Wang said China will hold the 19th CPC National Congress and after entering the critical stage of the 13th Five-Year Plan period (2016-20).

China will stay focused amid the international turmoil, seize opportunities in the ever-changing

situation and keep fostering a new pattern for the major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics.

Wang listed priorities in next year's diplomacy. First of all, China will bear the big picture in mind and create an enabling environment for the 19th CPC National Congress.

Secondly, the country will forge ahead and prepare for the two major home-field diplomatic events in the coming year, namely the international cooperation summit forum on the "Belt and Road" initiative and the 9th BRICS Summit.

Thirdly, China will maintain its strategic focus in order to realize a smooth transition of China-US ties and tap new cooperation potential while building a more healthy and stable framework for major-country relations to further expand China's friendship with other countries.

Fourthly, China will put people's interest in the first place, continue its efforts in building overseas livelihood projects and better serve national development, opening up and reform.

All in all, the Chinese diplomacy will strive for new success and make new contributions to realizing the Chinese dream, that is the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, Wang added.