

Work together for a more promising future of China-Chile relations

Xi Jinping

President of the People's Republic of China

Chile, known as “the land where the earth ends”, is situated between the sea and mountains and boasts beautiful landscape, rich resources and splendid culture. The industrious and ingenious people of Chile, with their strengths and perseverance, have created a development miracle.

Five years ago, I visited Chile and was deeply impressed by the country. Today, as I set foot on this beautiful land again, I feel very much at home and begin my visit with great expectations.

China and Chile are far away from each other, but the two peoples enjoy a long history of interactions and profound friendship. Pablo Neruda, a Nobel Prize laureate in literature and a major poet in Chile, referred to China affectionately as a “great brother”. Even the names of our two countries, China and Chile, resemble those of two brothers and our two peoples have indeed fostered a brotherly relationship.

The two peoples have the tradition of mutual understanding and affection. Though our two peoples are separated by the ocean, we admire each other. Neruda paid multiple visits to China and wrote poems such as *Cancion de la tierra China* and *El Viento de la Asia*, in which he expressed his love and best wishes for China. His works have been widely read in China with influence on many Chinese poets. Jose Venturelli, a famous artist of Chile, lived in China for years. He learned from the skills of Chinese ink painting and created works such as the *Yangtze River*, which demonstrated his strong attachment to China. These poems and paintings reflect the profound friendship between the two peoples. These Chilean friends established the Chile-China Cultural Association, the first non-governmental organization committed to developing friendly ties with China in Latin America, and encouraged a great number of visionary people to join in the cause of growing China-Chile friendship. In Santiago, there is a Yangtze River Primary School, whose name signifies that China-Chile friendship is as vibrant as the Yangtze River.

The two peoples have the tradition of helping and supporting each other. When the devastating mining accident occurred in Chile in 2010, a Chinese equipment-making company was actively involved in the rescue operation and contributed to the rescue of 33 miners. In 2015 when north Chile was hit by a massive flood, China lent its support immediately and the Chinese community in Chile also made generous donations. Relevant authorities in Chile offered timely help to the Chinese nationals stranded in the flood. All this has reflected the sincere friendship between our two peoples who share weal and woe.

The two peoples have the tradition of making pioneering efforts. A number of “firsts” have been achieved in our bilateral ties. Former President Salvador Allende, with his extraordinary vision, decided to establish diplomatic ties with New China 46 years ago, making Chile the first country in South America to do so and opening a new chapter in China-Chile relations. Chile was the first Latin American country to sign a bilateral agreement with China on its WTO accession, to recognize China as a full market economy and to sign with China a bilateral Free Trade Agreement (FTA). Driven by the FTA, our bilateral trade volume reached US\$31.8 billion in 2015, nearly five folds of that ten years ago. China has become Chile's largest trading partner and its largest export market of such products as copper, cherry, blueberry, sea food and wine. Chile has become China's third largest trading partner in Latin America. Not long ago, China Construction Bank opened its branch in Chile and became the first RMB settlement bank in Latin America, adding another “first” to our relations. Thanks to the concerted efforts of our two governments and people from all sectors, our bilateral ties have grown from strength to strength and yielded fruitful results.

The Chinese people refer to a good relationship as “a bond of gold and jade”. The gold medals for 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing were made of gold from Chile and jade from China. These medals are symbols of the brotherly relations between the Chinese and Chilean peoples.

The China-Chile ties have enjoyed long-term stable growth because both sides are committed to treating each other as equals with mutual respect and trust and leveraging mutual complementarity for win-win outcomes. More importantly, both sides have kept up with the times and made pioneering efforts to push bilateral relations to new highs.

The international situation is now undergoing profound and complex changes. The world economic recovery is in difficulty and global challenges are on the rise. Both China and Chile are at a critical stage of development and face similar opportunities and challenges. The Chinese people are working hard for achieving the two centenary goals (i.e., to finish building a moderately prosperous society in all respects by the time the Communist Party of China celebrates its centenary in 2021 and to turn China into a modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced and harmonious by the time the People's Republic of China celebrates its centenary in 2049) and realizing the great renewal of the Chinese nation. Chile is also making great efforts along its path of reform and development. Such a common mission of development has further strengthened our existing close ties.

Friends in Latin America often say that one can walk fast when traveling alone and walk a long distance when traveling with friends. I look forward to in-depth exchanges with friends from various sectors of Chile during this visit so that we can carry forward the fine tradition of China-Chile relations and draw a new blueprint for bilateral cooperation to advance common development of our two countries.

-- **We should remain committed to mutual respect and consolidate political foundation for our relations.** Our two countries should strengthen exchanges in all aspects, give each other firm support in our respective efforts to follow a development path suited to our national realities and render each other understanding and support on issues bearing on each other's core interests and major concerns.

-- **We should enhance our complementarity and promote common development.** Our two countries should improve the building of FTA, promote trade and investment facilitation and increase mutual investment. We should deepen cooperation in mining, agriculture, infrastructure, communications, clean energy and scientific innovation so as to bring more benefits to the two peoples.

-- **We should expand cultural and people-to-people exchanges and consolidate traditional friendship.** Gabriela Mistral, a Chilean writer, said that friendship is mutual trust deeply rooted in heart. Our two sides should further facilitate people-to-people exchanges and expand cooperation in such areas as culture, education, sports and tourism so that the friendship between the two peoples will be carried forward from generation to generation.

-- **We should strengthen strategic coordination and uphold our common interest.** China and Chile, as two important Pacific-rim countries, should enhance communication and coordination in the United Nations, APEC and other multilateral mechanisms and push for the building of the Asia-Pacific FTA so as to add new impetus to the world economic development.

Although Latin American countries now face more challenges on their way to development, this land is still full of hope. As Neruda once said, if we look at the map of America, we will find a very promising vista. We will then have greater confidence in the future of Latin America. Chile, as the gateway to Latin America and the current rotating chair of the Pacific Alliance, plays an important role in regional affairs. China is ready to work with Chile to push China-Latin America Comprehensive Cooperative Partnership forward for greater development and build a community of shared future.

As a Chinese poem goes, "If you have a friend afar who knows your heart, distance can't keep you two apart." With the advancement of economic globalization and IT application, the Pacific Ocean can no longer keep China and Chile apart. Instead, it is a bond or a bridge linking our two countries. So let us work together for a more promising future of China-Chile relations.