

China-Ecuador ties better than ever: Chinese ambassador

Chinese President Xi Jinping's state visit to Ecuador, the first visit to the Latin American country by a Chinese head of state, is of milestone significance and will lift bilateral relations to a new high, Chinese ambassador to Ecuador Wang Yulin said in an article published in the People's Daily on Friday before Xi kicked off his tour.

The following is the translation of the article:

Ecuador is a South American country of great importance. It covers 256,000 square kilometers and has a population of 16 million. With rich natural resources, great biodiversity and abundant agricultural products, the time-honored country is a major producer and exporter of bananas, cocoa, prawns and flowers.

Though China and Ecuador are far away from each other, the friendship between the two people goes back a long time. Since the two nations established diplomatic ties in 1980, they have enhanced mutual political trust, deepened pragmatic cooperation in trade and finance, intensified cultural exchanges and maintained close coordination in international and regional affairs.

I had a chance to visit Ecuador in 1997, during when I was touched by the friendship shown to China and the Chinese people from this South American country far away on the other side of the Pacific.

As the 13th Chinese ambassador to Ecuador, I am honored to witness the fruitful results of this bilateral strategic partnership. As bilateral ties now march toward multidimensional and wide-ranging development, China and Ecuador have become sincere and trusting friends with mutually beneficial cooperation, and their ties are now better than ever.

With increasing exchanges at all levels, both nations have also witnessed a deepening political trust. Ecuadoran President Rafael Correa completed a successful state visit to China in January, 2015, during which, the two heads of state announced the elevation of bilateral ties to a strategic partnership. At the same time, the two countries strengthened political, military, congressional and local exchanges on all fronts.

The pragmatic cooperation between China and Ecuador in trade and finance has yielded great success. China is now the third biggest trade partner for Ecuador, while Ecuador is China's important energy cooperation partner in Latin America, a major destination for Chinese investment and financing as well as a market for contract work.

Bilateral trade volume reached \$3.8 billion in 2015 and products including bananas, prawns and

flowers exported from Ecuador are favored by Chinese consumers. Over 90 Chinese enterprises have landed in Ecuador. A series of strategic projects, such as ECU 911, a nationwide system for emergency responses, and Coca Codo Sinclair, a hydropower station built by Chinese enterprises, have been put into use one after another. The hydropower station is the biggest in Ecuador.

These projects, brought about through bilateral pragmatic cooperation, have yielded tangible benefits to both countries.

Both countries have also increased their cultural exchanges and deepened person-to-person friendships. People in Ecuador admire the glorious Chinese history and profound Chinese civilization. Meanwhile, the beautiful natural views and exuberant local culture also draws more and more Chinese citizens to the wondrous South American nation.

Bilateral exchanges in technology, culture and education are showing great momentum. Over 400 students from Ecuador are studying in China. This August, a visa-free agreement formally took effect in both countries, which will allow more convenient exchanges.

After a 7.8-magnitude earthquake hit the west coast of Ecuador on April 16, causing heavy casualties and property loss, the Chinese government reached out to the victims with compassion and sympathy. Chinese President Xi Jinping expressed his condolences to his Ecuadoran counterpart Rafael Correa and the Chinese government and Red Cross Society of China offered monetary aid to Ecuador and the local Red Cross.

In addition to these efforts, humanitarian relief materials were provided by the Chinese government. Chinese enterprises and Chinese citizens in Ecuador also lent a helpful hand in the disaster relief. Despite the long distance, many Chinese rescue teams went to the disaster-stricken areas to send their help.

A friend in need is a friend indeed. In Ecuador's most difficult times, China's actions not only speak volumes for the bilateral strategic partnership and brotherly relationship, but also impress upon the world its responsibility.

Xi's upcoming state visit to Ecuador will be the first made by a Chinese head of state. With monumental meanings, it will surely bring bilateral ties to a new level. I believe that with concerted efforts on both sides, the China-Ecuador strategic partnership will make greater developments and will bring benefits to both countries and their people