

China, Latin America to enjoy deeper cooperation

By Alicia Barcena

Chinese President Xi Jinping's forthcoming Latin American trip will be a milestone for both sides to deepen their exchanges and cooperation. The UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) holds great expectations from Xi's visit.

China is the second-largest trade partner as well as a major export destination of Latin American and Caribbean countries, while Latin America has become the major destination of the exports of Chinese automobile, railways, telecommunication, engineering machinery and other products.

The total trade volume between China and Latin America amounted to \$236.545 billion in 2015, of which \$132.216 billion was contributed by China's exports to Latin America, and \$104.329 billion was from China's imports from the continent. The growth of China's imports from Latin America, coming amid the sluggish global trade, shows that the structure of bilateral trade is more reasonable now.

The economic and trade ties between Latin America and China showed great vitality in the 21st century. With generous investments in mining and natural gas industries, China remains the most important investor in Latin America and contributes a lot to bilateral economic and trade ties.

Bilateral economic and trade cooperation has great potential to develop. It is hoped that Xi's visit will further boost the relationship.

After both sides put the China-Latin American Countries and Caribbean States Cooperation Plan (2015-19), a roadmap for bilateral collaboration, into practice two years ago, government departments, business community, academic community and civil societies on both sides have discussed cooperation blueprints covering agriculture, infrastructure, science and technology on many occasions.

The Chinese government's emphasis on promoting cooperation with Latin American partners presents a historical opportunity for Latin America. Besides trade of primary commodities, Latin America expects to work with China to further improve local productivity, infrastructure, logistics network and personnel training since these fields are essential to the balanced and inclusive development and reduction of the wealth gap in this region.

Meanwhile, since China has made remarkable achievements in the high-tech sector, the experience borrowed from China will help with Latin America's integration into digital revolution and its smooth transition to a green economy. In such a backdrop, China can provide important support for Latin America, which is in dire need of structural reform and sustainable development.

The cooperation between China and the community of Latin American and Caribbean countries

will surely benefit the latter's campaign of industrial upgrade. In the meantime, bilateral cooperation will improve the latter's infrastructure, connectivity and logistics, boost regional economic and trade cooperation, and elevate its status in the global industrial chain.

On the other hand, Latin America has accumulated abundant experience in social policy, urbanization and environmental protection, which can work as reference for China in dealing with similar challenges.

More importantly, the China-Latin America relationship has come to a transformation point. The China-Latin American Countries and Caribbean States Cooperation Plan (2015-19) rightly serves as a stepping stone for this transformation, because it provides a systematic framework and guideline for bilateral cooperation. At present, the plan needs to be translated into real action so as to lay a solid foundation for future bilateral cooperation.

(The author is executive secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.)

Source: People's Daily