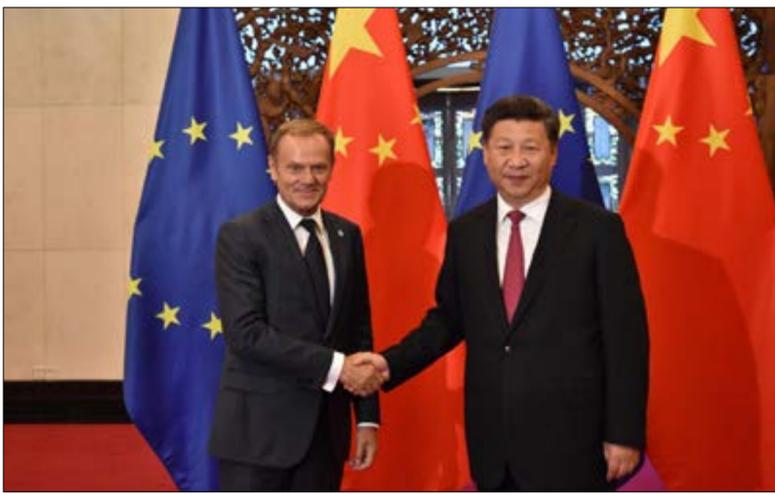


China-EU Ties Crucial in Trump's Era: European Experts

BRUSSELS - The relations between China and the European Union (EU) are crucial in the era of Donald Trump, when the U.S. administration is set to pursue America's interest first and distancing itself from global economic leadership, said European experts. From a global perspective, China-EU ties are crucial in the era of Trump, Alicia Garcia-Herrero, a senior research fellow in Brussels-based think tank Bruegel and chief economist for Asia of investment management firm Natixis, said in a recent interview with Xinhua.

"The U.S. administration is simply too erratic to be trusted and is set to pursue America's interest first," she said. "EU and China need to take care of global issues



and try to keep the world in the multilateral track." "The China-EU relations were one of the most important trade and investment relations in the world, with a significant impact on economic performance," Fredrik Erixon, director of Brussels-based think tank European Center for International Political Economy, told Xinhua. "If the relations sour, everyone will suffer; if they flourish, we will all benefit," Erixon said. "Now that protectionism is increasing and we are seeing a U.S. distancing itself from global economic leadership and openness, the protection of the free trade system is ever more important," he said. "It is up to China and Europe to mount the defense of this system." (Xinhua)

DPRK Accuses U.S. Of Plotting another Korean War with Vancouver Meeting

PYONGYANG - The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) has accused the United States of plotting to provoke another Korean War by convening a foreign ministers' meeting in Vancouver, Canada.

"The United States, in collusion with Canada, created the scene of war simulation by summoning the foreign ministers' meeting of the countries participated in the Korean War," said a spokesman of the Institute for American Studies of DPRK Foreign Ministry in a statement late Thursday, according to the Korean Central News Agency.

Some 20 countries, mostly those which joined the United States in its aggression war against the DPRK in 1950s, participated in the meeting on Jan. 15-16. Japan and South Korea also took part in it.

The spokesman said U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson "openly trumpeted" at the meeting that the United States and its allies would intensify the pressure campaign against the DPRK by limiting export of oil and industrial products, strengthening naval control and expelling DPRK workers abroad until it stops its nuclear program. (Xinhua)

1.3 Million Children Displaced by Iraq's War with Islamic State: UNICEF

GENEVA - About half the 2.6 million people displaced in Iraq after a three-year war with Islamic State militants are children and persisting violence hampers efforts to ease their suffering, the United Nations said on Friday.

While the Baghdad government last month declared victory over Islamic State after wresting back almost all the territory IS seized in 2014, persistent bombing and shooting attacks make it difficult to rebuild the lives of displaced people,

according to UNICEF, the U.N. children's agency. "We believe that as a result of the conflict, a lack of investment over the years, and the poverty ... that there are 4 million children now in need across Iraq," said Peter Hawkins, UNICEF chief representative in the country.

He told a Geneva news briefing by telephone from Baghdad that 1.3 million of the 2.6 million displaced by the often devastating fighting with Islamic State were children.



"While the fighting has come to an end in several areas, spikes of violence continue in others - just this week, three bombings went off in Baghdad," UNICEF Regional

Director Geert Cappelaere said in a statement. "Violence is not only killing and maiming children; it is destroying schools, hospitals, homes and roads. (Reuters)

Pence's Middle East Trip Unlikely to Subdue Rising Rage over U.S. Policy



WASHINGTON - U.S. Vice President Mike Pence will start a trip on Friday to the Middle East including stops in Egypt, Jordan and Israel. The up-

coming tour is likely to be bumpy and will do little to mollify the rising rage in the region over America's Palestinian policy, said experts.

POSTPONED TRIP The White House said Monday that the five-day trip will enable Pence to meet with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, King Abdullah II of Jordan and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, concentrating on key topics like combating terrorism and improving U.S. national security.

The visit was postponed last month after President Donald Trump recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital and announced that the U.S. embassy would move there. There

is still roaring anger across the region over Trump's announcement. During his tour, Pence will not visit the West Bank or meet with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, who ordered Trump's decision be brought to the UN Security Council for a vote last year, and canceled the meeting with Pence in protest over Trump's Palestine policy.

Earlier, the Israeli parliament approved the "unified Jerusalem" bill aiming to separate Palestinian neighborhoods from Jerusalem. (Xinhua)

UN Chief Warns of Increasing Threats of Weapons of Mass Destruction

UNITED NATIONS - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Thursday warned that threats posed by weapons of mass destruction seem to be gathering force in today's world.

Global anxieties about nuclear weapons are at the highest level since the end of the Cold War; trust on nuclear and other issues between the United States and Russia continues to ebb; the Iran nuclear deal is being questioned; the use of chemical weapons in Syria seriously challenges the global taboo

against these weapons of mass destruction, Guterres told a high-level debate at the Security Council on weapons of mass destruction. "The situation on the Korean Peninsula is the most tense and dangerous peace and security challenge in the world today. I remain deeply concerned over the growing risk of military confrontation and the unimaginable consequences that would result," said Guterres. At the same time, he said, the council's unity also paved the way for diplomatic engagement. (Xinhua)

UN Says Conflict, Hunger Uprooted 700,000 South Sudanese in 2017

JUBA - About 700,000 people were forced to flee South Sudan in 2017 as refugees to neighboring countries due to conflict, hunger and disease, the UN humanitarian agency said on Thursday. The UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said nearly 4 million people have been displaced, including over 1.9 million internally displaced and over 2 million who have fled as refugees to Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia, Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). "The number of South Sudanese forced to leave their country in 2017 is slightly lower than the 760,000 people who left in 2016," the UN agency said in its latest bulletin released in Juba. According to OCHA, over 70 percent of the 700,000 fled in the first half of 2017, which saw multiple military offensives in Upper Nile, Jonglei, and the Greater Equatoria region. According to the report, majority of those uprooted crossed into Uganda in the first half of 2017 following increased hostilities in East, Central, and Western Equatoria. "Uganda now hosts over one million South Sudanese refugees; of those more than 85 percent are women and children," said the UN. It said the number of South Sudanese living in six refugee camps in northern Uganda rose to 1.03 million in October, but dropped to 986,000 by the end of December. Others crossed to Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, the DRC and Central African Republic (CAR), which are hosts to more than one million South Sudanese refugees. Citing partners in the region, OCHA said security concerns were mainly fueled by fear of indiscriminate killings, ethnically motivated attacks, torture, looting and burning of homes, and forced recruitment of young people by armed groups in South Sudan. (Xinhua)

Syrian Gov't to Participate in Upcoming Syrian Talks in Vienna: UN

DAMASCUS - The Deputy of the UN special Envoy to Syria said here Thursday that the Syrian government has agreed to take part in the planned Syrian talks in Vienna, Austria later this month.

In a press briefing following his meeting with Syria's Deputy Foreign Minister Faisal Mekadd, RamziEzzedineRamzi said Mekadd informed him about the approval of the Syrian government

to take part in the Vienna talks. Meanwhile, Ramzi hoped for a positive engagement in the Vienna talks by the participants, linking the success of the Vienna talks with the success of another Syrian talks that are supported by Russia and will take place after the Vienna talks in the Russian resort city of Sochi.

"We are looking forward to a constructive engagement from all Syrian

sides whether from the government delegation or the opposition because without a doubt, the success of the Vienna talks is the success of the Sochi talks," he said. A day earlier, the United Nations Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura said he had invited the Syrian government and opposition to a special meeting that would focus on constitutional issues in Syria, which is to be held on Jan. 25-26 in Vienna. (Xinhua)

Turkey to Carry out Military Operation in Syria's Afrin: Turkish DM

ANKARA - Turkey will carry out a military operation in Syria's northern border region of Afrin to "remove the terrorist presence" there, Turkish Defense Minister NurettinCanikli said Friday.

Speaking on local news channel A Haber, Canikli said "it will happen," referring to the upcoming military operation against the People's Protection Units (YPG), which is considered as the Syrian affiliates of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) by Ankara. The defense minister did not give any details of timing.

"The threat level against Turkey is increasing day by day," Canikli noted.

Turkey has all the information available regarding the number of YPG militants, their weapons systems and their locations, and is capable of blocking the group's defense systems, he added.

According to the minister, Russia has told Turkey that it will withdraw its military assets from the region and talks between the two countries continue regarding the imminent operation. Commenting on the U.S. recent statement on the Afrin operation, Canikli called them "nonsense," adding that it is "tactical" in nature, and aims to create confusion while employing psychological warfare. (Xinhua)

Russia, EU Sign Agreements on New Cooperation Programs

MOSCOW - Russia and the European Union (EU) have signed agreements to finance and implement two new cross-border cooperation programs for the period until 2020, EU Ambassador to Russia Markus Ederer said Thursday.

"I see the cross-border cooperation as a positive example of how much can be achieved by joint efforts in a constructive and positive environment," Ederer said in an online statement.

The programs worth 88 million euros (108 million U.S. dollars) involve Russia and its neighbors Lithuania and Poland, both EU members.

The programs will focus particularly on the preservation of historical and cultural heritage, the promotion of social inclusiveness, cooperation for a clean natural environment and efficient management of natural resources, the statement said.

They also aim to promote joint actions for effective border management and security, increasing access to adjacent regions, as well as developing innovation capacities, sustainable transport and communication models.

The latest agreement brought the number of cross-border cooperation programs between the EU and Russia to seven.

Previous programs included joint efforts to modernize heating systems in schools and hospitals in border areas, upgrade border crossing points' facilities, build recreational centers and promote ecological education. (Xinhua)

Neighbor News

EU, China Bet on Tourism to Boost Trade, Ease Tensions

BEIJING - At a time of increased tensions between Brussels and Beijing, the two partners met in Venice on Friday (19 January) to launch the EU-China Tourism Year, hoping to patch up or revitalise relations. The EU and China have common objectives with the EU-China Tourism Year, said European Commissioner ElzbietaBieńkowska: to improve mutual understanding, encourage cultural exchange and stimulate trade and investment. A tool for diplomacy

"This year could be a great opportunity first to enhance people to people but also enhance economic and cultural diplomacy," she said.

China has launched a charm offensive with the EU since US President Donald Trump took office

in an effort to find allies amid fears that Trump's protectionist 'America First' policies could undermine it. But the EU remains cautious about its second-largest trading partner, concerned by China's massive steel exports, its militarisation of islands in the South China Sea and a turn towards greater authoritarianism under President Xi Jinping. In that context, tourism is seen by both as a way to inject momentum into their strategic cooperation. The number of European tourists to China has grown rapidly since 2003 but appears to have reached a plateau and could even decline over the next eight years, according to data from the China National Tourism Administration. (Agencies)

Pakistan Accords High Priority to Health Sector: President

ISLAMABAD - President MamnoonHussain Friday said that Pakistan accorded high priority to health sector and was taking all possible steps to improve healthcare infrastructure and to provide quality medical care to the people. He was talking to a delegation of Royal College of Physicians (RCP), UK, which headed by its president Prof. Jane Dacre called on him here at the Aiwan-e-Sadr. The delegation included Ian Bullock, Prof. Ali Jawad, Prof. AamirGhafoor Khan, Prof. JavedAkram and Steve Crump. Senior officials of the Ministry of National Health Services and senior officers of the President's Secretariat were also present on the occasion. The President appreciated the RCP's partnership with Paki-

stani doctors and stated that projects like 'Future Hospital Pakistan' were going to set an example of patient care with mutual efforts. He emphasized that together they can make a difference by mitigating challenges to public health. He also urged the delegation to further enhance cooperation with the Pakistani doctors. The President commended the efforts of RCP in organising a conference on advance patient care in Pakistan. He underscored that such endeavours will be beneficial to raise the standards of medical education in the country. He congratulated the delegation on quinquennial celebration year of the RCP. He also wished them a pleasant and comfortable stay in Pakistan. (Monitoring Desk)

Iran, Russia Must Boost Close Cooperation on Mideast: Iranian Diplomat

TEHRAN - Iran and Russia must hold close consultations on the developments in the Middle East and the Arab world, Iranian Foreign Minister's Special Assistant for Political Affairs Hossein-Jaberi Ansari says.

"The two countries have great capacities to solve regional problems, particularly with regard to the fight against terrorism and we hope that these consultations will help boost and develop such capacities," Jaberi Ansari said in a meeting with Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov in Moscow on Friday. He added that Iran, Russia and Turkey must make necessary preparations ahead of the Syrian National Dialogue Congress, scheduled to be held in the Russian Black Sea resort city of

Sochi later this month aimed at resolving the years-long crisis in the Arab country. The Syrian National Dialogue Congress will be held in Sochi on January 29-30 following a similar initiative by Russia, Iran and Turkey in Kazakhstan. Many hope the talks could bring an end or significantly reduce the militancy in Syria although the United Nations insists that the initiative should not circumvent efforts led by the world body for reaching a political solution in Syria. They agreed to hold the Syrian National Dialogue Congress in the Russian city aimed at bringing to the table both the Syrian government and various opposition groups willing to enter into peace talks with Damascus. (Presstv)

Uzbek FM Meets with US Deputy Secretary of State

TASHKENT - As reported on the official website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan, on 17 January, 2018, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan AbdulazizKamilov met with the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Thomas Shannon in Washington.

During the conversation, the sides exchanged views on promising directions of further development of cooperation

between Uzbekistan and the US in political, trade-economic, investment, cultural-humanitarian and other spheres in light of practical implementation of the ideas expressed on 19 December, 2017, during a telephone conversation of the President of Uzbekistan ShavkatMirziyoyev and President Donald Trump. Other current issues on the bilateral agenda were also discussed at the meeting. (Agencies)