

China, EU Strengthen Efforts for Global Solutions to Water Crises

TURKU, Finland - China and the European Union (EU) vowed on Thursday to continue working together to fight global water crises, as hundreds of high-level decision makers and experts on water management from the two sides met in Turku, southwestern Finland.

China, the European Commission and several EU member states signed a declaration at the annual China Europe Water Platform (CEWP) in Turku to strengthen cooperation to promote sustainable and improve water security. Resolving water problems has a key role in the UN



Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that should be achieved by 2030. One of the 17 goals is securing access to clean water and sanitation for all.

It is natural for China and the EU to work together to solve "one of the most crucial problems in the future for mankind," Kimmo Tiilikainen, Finnish Minister for Housing, Energy and the Environment, said.

The minister told Xinhua ensuring adequate drinking water supplies and managing wastewater so that the environment was not polluted are key issues. (Xinhua)

Macron Signs Contested Labor Reform Code into Law

PARIS - French President Emmanuel Macron on Friday signed the controversial new labor rules into law, a day after thousands of opponents took to the streets across the country to protest the reform. A video broadcasted by local media, showed Macron, from his office at the Elysee Palace, was enacting legislation to lessen rigid labor rules by offering more flexibility to companies to hire and fire and more freedom in terms of pay and working conditions. "(It's) a campaign commitment and unprecedented in-depth

reform of labor market which is essential to our economy and society," the French president said. Changing labor regulations was a first test to France's youngest top official in modern history as he was haunted by public discontent that brought thousands of people who oppose labor reform onto the streets.

After long summer talks with labor unions, the decrees will be published in the official gazette on Saturday and become law in the coming days. They are set to take effect by year-end. (Xinhua)

U.S., Russian Militaries Hold Face-to-Face Talks on Syria: Pentagon

WASHINGTON - U.S. and Russian military officials had met face-to-face somewhere in the Middle East this week on de-confliction measures in the fight against the Islamic State (IS) in Syria, the Pentagon said on Thursday.

"The discussions emphasized the need to share operational graphics and locations to ensure that prevention of accidental targeting or other possible frictions that would distract from the defeat of ISIS," said Ryan Dil-

lon, a Baghdad-based spokesman for the U.S.-led coalition, at a Pentagon briefing, referring to another acronym of the extremist group.

Dillon declined to offer details on when or where the meeting occurred, but said that the exchange of information was focused on battles around Deir ez-Zor, where U.S.-backed rebel groups were operating close to Russian-backed Syrian government troops. Dillon also



indicated that follow-up meetings between U.S. military and Russian military would be held "perhaps in the same location." To avoid air accidents over Syria during

their airstrikes against the IS, the United States and Russia in 2015 were engaged in talks aimed at ensuring "deconfliction" of air operations in Syria. (Xinhua)

FDP Leader Hopes to Lead Opposition in Bundestag



BERLIN - Free Democratic Party (FDP) leader and chancellor candidate Christian Lindner has said he hopes his party will place third in the upcoming elections so as to

lead the opposition in the legislative body. Speaking Thursday evening in the "Election 2017 - The Final Round" TV program by public broadcasters ARD and ZDF,

Lindner predicted that the Christian Democratic Union led by Chancellor Merkel will once again enter into a coalition with the Christian Social Union (CSU) after the elections this Sunday.

In this case, the rightwing Alternative for Germany (AfD) "must not lead the opposition" and it is imperative for the FDP to win more seats in the Bundestag than the AfD, he said.

Latest polls show a head-to-head race between the AfD, FDP and The Left for the third place, with the

Greens trailing behind. According to the polls a coalition of CDU and FDP, as desired by many CDU and FDP politicians, is currently not mathematically possible. In addition to the grand coalition, the so-called "Jamaica alliance" by CDU, Greens and FDP is still a possible option for the election outcome.

Lindner and Greens candidate Katrin Goering-Eckardt did not elaborate on their position concerning this coalition option during the televised program. (Xinhua)

Trump's "America First" Agenda May Undermine U.S. Global Influence

WASHINGTON - U.S. President Donald Trump plans to reduce U.S. contributions to the United Nations in a bid to push his "America first" policy, a move experts said may undermine Washington's influence around the world.

Trump said Tuesday at the General Debate of 72nd Session of the UN General Assembly that "no member state shoulders a disproportionate share of the burden," three months after Washington cut its UN

peacekeeping budget by over half a billion U.S. dollars.

Indeed, Trump resents the amount of financial support that the United States provides, believing the United Nations does not have much of a positive impact on the world.

Moreover, many of Trump's supporters have disdain for the United Nations, saying it is an organization that has nothing to do with them, even as U.S. taxpayers foot 20 percent of the UN's bills. (Xinhua)

Tillerson Cites Strongest N.Korea Sanctions Ever

NEW YORK - Secretary of State Rex Tillerson says North Korea's Kim Jong Un is "being tested" by the strongest sanctions ever put in place by the U.S. and the international community. Tillerson won't say what the U.S. response would be if Kim's government tested a hydrogen bomb in the Pacific Ocean. Tillerson says it would be President Donald Trump's decision, but he adds that all military options remain on the table. He says Trump's threat to totally destroy North Korea shows the president takes "very seriously" his responsibility to protect Americans. Tillerson says American diplomatic efforts "continue unabated" to try to bring Kim's government to the negotiating table. He says the U.S. keeps pressing Russia and China to do more to squeeze Pyongyang economically. (AP)

Russian Submarine Launches Missiles Strike against Syrian Militants

MOSCOW - A Russian submarine fired Kalibr sea-based cruise missiles on Friday from underwater in the Mediterranean at facilities belonging to Nursra Front militants in Syria, the Russian Defense Ministry said. The missiles launched 300 km away destroyed important control points, training bases and armored vehicles of the militants in northwestern Idlib province, the Russian Defense Ministry said in a statement. The militants took part in an attempt to capture 29 Russian military policemen in the north of the neighboring province of Hama, according to the statement.

Syrian government troops supported by Russian air and naval forces are successfully advancing in various parts of the war-torn country, having liberated most of it from the militants. (Xinhua)

May to Set out Brexit Vision in Florence Amid Protests

FLORENCE, Italy - British Prime Minister Theresa May arrived in the central Italian city of Florence amid protests from local residents and British citizens in the area as she prepares to set out her vision for Brexit, her country's departure from the European Union.

May is expected to lobby the European Union for good terms on the deal, covering a wide array of topics including terms for trade between Britain and countries that remain in the European Union, the rights of EU citizens to work and travel in Brit-



ain, as well as tax issues. Before arriving in Italy, May said repeatedly she would rather have no deal than a bad one. But some within the European Union have said the bloc should make things as difficult as possible for Brit-

ain, at least in part to create a disincentive for other countries to take similar steps. Many protesters carried the blue-and-yellow flag of the European Union on streets of Florence, the Italian capital of culture. (Xinhua)

Xi Stresses Integrated Military, Civilian Development

BEIJING - Chinese President Xi Jinping on Friday called for stronger reform, innovation and resource integration to improve integrated military and civilian development.

Xi, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, made the remarks while presiding over the second plenary session of the Central Commission for Integrated Military and Civilian Development, which he also heads.

The session adopted a plan for the development of defense science, tech-

nology and industry during the 13th five-year-plan period (2016-2020), and guidelines on advancing integrated military and civilian development in defense science, technology and industry. Also adopted were guidelines on advancing highly integrated military and civilian development in military logistics during the 13th five-year-plan period, and a draft regulation on management of economic projects that are closely related to national defense.

It stressed independent innovation to ensure China can independently produce core products and own key defense technologies. (Xinhua)

China, Russia, South Korea Urge Caution with DPRK at UN Assembly

UNITED NATIONS - The General Debate of the 72nd Session of the UN General Assembly glided past the halfway mark on Thursday with speakers from China, Russia and South Korea, three front-row nations of the Korean Peninsula nuclear crisis, urging caution and diplomacy.

By late afternoon representatives of more than 100 nations had taken the green podium, surpassing the halfway mark of the 196 speeches scheduled. South Korean President Moon Jae-in called for caution with the Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea (DPRK).

"All of our endeavors are to prevent the outbreak of war and maintain peace," he said. "In that respect, the situation surrounding the North Korean (DPRK) nuclear issue needs to be managed stably so that tensions will not become overly intensified or accidental military clashes will not destroy peace."

"We do not desire the collapse of North Korea (DPRK)," he said. "We will not seek unification by absorption or artificial means."

He urged the DPRK to "immediately cease making reckless choices that could lead to its own isolation and downfall, and choose the path of dialogue."

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi stressed the importance of denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula. China will continue to strictly implement the UN Security Council resolutions concerning the DPRK, Wang said. (Xinhua)

Neighbor News

China Committed to Denuclearization of Korean Peninsula: FM

UNITED NATIONS - Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said Thursday that China is firmly committed to the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula during his speech at the General Debate of the 72nd session of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly.

"The planet does not need any new nuclear power," Wang said. Wang urged the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) not to go its own way in a dangerous direction. Meanwhile, he urged the United States to honor its "Four Nos" commitment to the DPRK, and called for all parties concerned to play constructive roles in relieving tensions in the region.

The "Four Nos" commitment was stated by U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson on Aug. 1, and refers to Washington's promise not to seek a regime change in

Pyeongyang, not to seek the collapse of the DPRK government, not to seek the acceleration of a reunified Korean Peninsula, and not to send its military north of the 38th Parallel that acts as the boundary between the DPRK and the Republic of Korea.

"We should not give up when a peaceful settlement still stands a chance, and strive for negotiation as it is the only solution. Respective parties should meet each other halfway and address each other's reasonable concerns," said Wang.

By the time the peninsula realizes denuclearization, a peace mechanism should also be established, he said.

Wang further pointed out that China is committed to promoting peace and has been making continuous efforts to the peaceful settlement of the issue. (Xinhua)

German FM Defends Iran Nuclear Deal

UNITED NATIONS - German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel on Thursday stressed the importance of preserving the international agreement on Iran's nuclear program, warning that its crumble would have spillover effects on non-proliferation and disarmament.

"It is more important than ever that the international architecture for arms control and disarmament does not crumble. Existing treaties and agreements must not be called into question. That applies in particular to Iran's nuclear agreement," Gabriel told the UN General Assembly.

The July 2015 agreement between Iran and the six world powers is not only about Iran, but also about the credibility of the international community, said Gabriel.

"Which state would refrain from developing its own nuclear program if it turns out that negotiated agreements do not endure, and confidence in agreements with the international community is not worth the paper they are written on?" he asked.

"How are we going to convince countries like North Korea that international agreements provide them security, and in so doing make them commit to further disarmament efforts, if the only international example for such an endeavor being successful - the agreement with Iran - no longer has effect?" (Xinhua)

Abbasi, Trump Emphasise Need to Continue Bilateral Ties

UNITED NATIONS - Pakistani Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi held a brief meeting with US President Donald Trump here on Tuesday evening during which the two leaders talked about the need to continue their countries' partnership in the fight against terror.

Mr. Abbasi and Mr. Trump met at the reception that the latter held for world leaders attending the 72nd session of the United Nations General Assembly at Palace Hotel, New York. Neither side talked about this meeting until Wednesday afternoon when the prime minister disclosed it at the US-Pakistan Business Council's luncheon.

"On the Afghanistan issue, we are working with the US government. We had a very productive meeting with Vice President (Mike) Pence yesterday," Mr. Abbasi said.

"I also met President Donald Trump at his reception and we discussed the issue in brief. He was also very positive about Pakistan's role and the continuity of the Pakistan-US partnership to fight terror." (Monitoring Desk)

Uzbekistan's Leader Talks Rights, Now More Action Needed

UNITED NATIONS - In his inaugural address on Tuesday to the UN General Assembly, having assumed power last year, Uzbekistan's President Shavkat Mirziyoyev used this global stage to pledge to protect human rights - a promise that breaks with Uzbekistan's past. Now, it's time to follow words with action, the Human Rights Watch says.

Until recently, this speech from an Uzbek President would have seemed inconceivable. Mirziyoyev served as prime minister to Islam Karimov, Uzbekistan's late, long-time authoritarian leader who was the architect of the country's atrocious human rights record.

Mirziyoyev's remarks seemed aimed at moving on from Karimov's terrible legacy, even expressing the goal to build "a democratic state and a just society" where "human interests come first". Mirziyoyev added: "We are deeply convinced that people must not serve government bodies, rather government bodies must serve the people." (HRW)