

Spotlight: Xi-Trump meeting helps achieve much friendlier tone in China-U.S. ties: experts

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WASHINGTON, April 10 (Xinhua) -- The just-concluded meeting between Chinese President Xi Jinping and his U.S. counterpart Donald Trump was very positive as it helped achieve a much friendlier tone in China-U.S. ties, experts said.

The April 6-7 meeting, the first between the two leaders since Trump took office in January, was held at the Trump-owned Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida.

Both sides hailed the meeting as "positive and fruitful" as the two leaders increased their mutual understanding and established personal friendship through face-to-face discussions of issues of mutual concern.

The meeting "helped achieve a much friendlier tone in relations between China and the new Trump administration," Ted Carpenter, senior fellow of Defense and Foreign Policy Studies at the Cato Institute, told Xinhua in an interview.

"It alleviated concerns around the world that there might be a sharp increase in bilateral tensions," Carpenter added.

The meeting was "quite positive," Douglas Paal, vice president for studies and director of Asia Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, told Xinhua.

"Though the real measure of the meeting will follow the next 10 months of work, but so far, so good," Paal said.

To Professor David Lampton, director of China Studies at the Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies, the Xi-Trump meeting "went pretty well."

"This meeting seems to have gone better than most people would have forecasted here - in the United States," Lampton told Xinhua.

The two leaders "had an opportunity to come to know each other better, have a little more trust, but that it looks like there was the beginning of substance, although there is a long way to go," Lampton said.

Lampton further pointed out that Trump's acceptance of Xi's invitation to visit China within this year also "shows that there is a priority attached to managing this relationship."

"I think it's more significant that it shows this is an important relationship, and that he (Trump) wants to invest in it," he added.

At the meeting, the two leaders agreed to create a four-pronged high-level dialogue mechanism to deal with major issues on security, economic relations, cyber security and law enforcement, and people-to-people exchanges.

The two major powers also agreed to expand cooperation in varied areas while properly handling sensitive issues, managing differences in a constructive manner, and strengthening communication and coordination on major global and regional affairs.

"The decision to establish specific mechanisms of focused dialogues on key issues was especially important and useful," Carpenter said.

"There are very real disagreements between China and the United States on all four issues, but flexible, creative diplomacy pursued in a spirit of cooperation could go a long way toward narrowing, perhaps even overcoming, those disagreements," he said.

Paal noted that the establishment of the four-pronged high-level dialogue mechanism was "a repackaging" of the previously-known annual Strategic and Economic Dialogue (S&ED) held under the Obama administration.

"The test is in what they accomplish," he said.

Paal agreed with Xi's remarks that cooperation is the only correct choice for China and the United States, saying that if the two countries choose competition over cooperation, "that could turn into conflict, which could ruin the 21st century."

"The scope for cooperation is large, but the scope for conflict is even greater, so major efforts will be required to avoid conflict," Paal said.

Lampton noted that opportunities for cooperation exist between the two top economies in the area of infrastructure, as they try to achieve a more balanced trade.

China aims to boost infrastructure construction to increase interconnectivity and cooperation between China and the rest of Eurasia, through its Belt and Road Initiative unveiled in 2013.

At Mar-a-Lago, Xi told Trump that China welcomes the United States to participate in the initiative.

"Xi and China have a vision of the modernization of and development of Asia, Southeast Asia, Central Asia, South Asia through interconnectivity (by) building infrastructure," Lampton said.

He added that, from what he learned during a recent visit to China, Beijing is looking for ways to cooperate with the United States to begin the process of building infrastructure throughout Asia, rather than exclude the United States.

Lampton also foresaw that China would participate in the major infrastructure initiative proposed by Trump, who vows to spend 1 trillion U.S. dollars in upgrading U.S. roads, bridges and airports.

"So I think this is Chinese dream to make China part of an integrated economic organism...And the U.S. could become part of that rather than opposing it," he said.

Carpenter said that a cooperative China-U.S. relationship can greatly benefit both global security and global economic health, while a tense or hostile relationship could do great damage in both areas.

"China and the United States need each other," he said.