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## **BRITAIN, CHINA PLEDGE TO PROMOTE FREE TRADE**

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Reuters (16 February 2017)

China and Britain have pledged to promote free trade and cooperate on building a open world economy, fanning efforts to shore up what the two governments have called a "golden era" in their relationship, the Xinhua news agency reported on Friday.

China is one of the countries Britain hopes to sign a free trade agreement with once it leaves the European Union, and London and Beijing have been keen to show that Britain's withdrawal from the bloc will not affect ties.

The pledges on trade and cooperation were made during a Thursday meeting by Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and his British counterpart Boris Johnson on the sidelines of a meeting of the Group of 20 largest industrialized countries held in Germany's western city of Bonn.

The two countries have in recent months announced closer cooperation in areas such as financial services as the British government prepares to negotiate the country's EU divorce.

Wang said that both nations would promote flagship cooperation on projects such as the Hinkley Point nuclear power station in Britain, and would look to strengthen their partnership on issues such as trade through close high-level exchanges, Xinhua said.

Johnson said that Britain will strengthen strategic cooperation with China on international affairs, the report added.

British Prime Minister Theresa May has been invited by China to attend a major summit on the "One Belt, One Road" initiative to build a new Silk Road, diplomatic sources have told Reuters.

(Reporting by Brenda Goh; Editing by Ben Blanchard & Simon Cameron-Moore)

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