
LAVROV UNDERLINES GOOD CHINA-RUSSIA TIES

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China-Russia trade has hit a historic high, but there is still potential to expand, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said.

Lavrov, who gave his annual news conference on Wednesday, said he has full confidence for the future of the bilateral relations, as the two governments have worked out plans that were endorsed by President Xi Jinping and his counterpart Vladimir Putin during their meetings in 2018.

The two-way trade between China and Russia hit \$100 billion, and China has become the largest trading partner of Russia, according to Chinese Ministry of Commerce.

Lavrov said more than 70 cooperation projects, involving more than \$100 billion, have been inked in the sectors of energy, agriculture, transport and aerospace.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said China highly values the active comments by Lavrov about Sino-Russian relations.

The year of 2019 marks the 70th anniversary since the two countries established diplomatic relations, and Hua said the good China-Russia relationship is not only of the mutual demands from the people of both countries, but also a stable strategic need to maintain world peace.

Lavrov said Russia and China will continue to enhance the coordination between Eurasian Economic Union and the Belt and Road Initiative, and to strengthen the cooperation in some international issues under the framework of BRICS, Shanghai Cooperation Organization and other global organizations.

Lavrov also called on the West to abandon unfair competition practices, including sanctions on Russia.

Responding to a question from a journalist from Iceland, who stated the negative impact of Russian sanctions on his country, Lavrov explained why Russia decided to use counter sanctions on European agricultural products.

"Release of counter sanctions was due to the fact that Russian banks that lend to the agro-industrial complex of the country fell under Western sanctions. That is why Russian farmers found themselves in discriminatory conditions in terms of the possibility of attracting funding for their production. There is only one way out-we should abandon attempts of using unfair competition through sanctions," he said.

Lavrov said Russia does not expect the United States to withdraw from the Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (the New START treaty).

"As for the New START treaty, many countries have fears that its dismantling is envisaged by the US plans," he said.

"We hope this is not the case. We are doing quite a lot to remove all possible irritants in the New START Treaty issue as we are interested in extending this treaty."

He said Russia also questions the US fulfillment of the New START treaty. "The questions we raise with regard to the US actions to exclude a whole range of strategic offensive armaments that are declared nonnuclear weapons are legitimate and we have already acquainted experts from the United States and other Western countries with them."

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