

Beijing rejects unilateral US trade probes

Paris talks deemed 'constructive', but further engagement needed

By **WANG KEJU** in Beijing, **ZHANG ZHOXIANG** in Brussels and **ZHENG WANYING** in Paris

China and the United States discussed the "possible extension" of existing bilateral tariff and nontariff measures and floated the idea of establishing a working mechanism to promote bilateral trade and investment cooperation during their latest round of trade talks in Paris, France, a senior Chinese official said on March 16.

Describing the one-and-a-half-days of talks as "in-depth, candid and constructive", Li Chenggang, China's international trade representative at the Ministry of Commerce, told reporters that the two sides achieved some "preliminary consensus on certain issues" and will continue to engage in consultations going forward.

Following the conclusion of the sixth round of China-US economic and trade consultations on March 16,

Li said that both sides affirmed that "a stable economic and trade relationship serves the interests of both countries and benefits the world".

Regarding the issue of bilateral tariff levels under the new circumstances, Li said the US side explained the latest adjustments to its tariff measures and future considerations. The Chinese side expressed concern over the uncertainty arising from these actions, and both sides affirmed their mutual commitment to maintaining stability in bilateral tariff levels, he added.

To promote bilateral trade and investment cooperation, Li said the two sides discussed the idea of establishing a working mechanism to facilitate such cooperation.

"We jointly reviewed the implementation of the consensus reached during the five rounds of economic and trade consultations last year, and gave a generally positive assessment of the implementation," he said.

He noted that the two sides also



A container vessel docks at Tianjin Port in the Binhai New Area of Tianjin on March 16. China has expressed its opposition to two Section 301 trade probes recently launched by the United States.

DU PENGHUI / XINHUA

discussed in depth each other's economic and trade concerns.

Li pointed out that the US has continued to introduce several restrictive measures targeting Chinese trade and investment. In particular, the administration recently launched two separate Section 301 trade investigations, both of which include China.

The Chinese side raised "serious representations" and expressed "grave concern" during the consultations to express Beijing's consistent opposition to such unilateral probes, he said.

"We are concerned that the potential outcomes of these investigations could interfere with and undermine the hard-won stability in China-US economic and trade relations," Li said. "We will closely monitor the developments of these investigations and take appropriate measures

in due course to safeguard China's legitimate rights and interests."

China hopes that the US will honor its commitments, meet China halfway, and work together to promote the steady and sustained growth of bilateral economic and trade ties, Li added.

John Ross, former director of economic and business policy for the mayor of London, said it would be in the interest of the world economy if the US abandons protectionist path and reaches constructive agreements with China in trade talks.

Liu Zhiqin, a senior fellow at Renmin University of China's Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies, said that only dialogue and consultation can ensure a way forward.

"China and the US are currently walking this path of consultation. Though the road is long and difficult ahead, there is already a positive

beginning," Liu said.

He added that China has plenty of patience, ample confidence, and the strength to engage with the US over the long haul, because "China's market is large enough, its consumer base is robust enough, and its industrial chain is complete enough".

Michael Schumann, chairman of the German Federal Association for Economic Development and Foreign Trade, said that "even a limited understanding between the world's two largest economies can reduce uncertainty for companies that depend on predictable rules and functioning supply chains".

For multinational corporations, the message would be that dialogue remains possible even amid strategic competition, Schumann said.

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China seen as more dependable partner than US

Polls in Western countries show Beijing scoring over Washington due to policy consistency

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Opinion polls conducted recently in major Western countries have indicated a significant shift in public perception, with China increasingly viewed as a reliable partner and a global leader in technology. Analysts said this trend, driven by China's predictable policy framework and fast pace of development, could encourage a more objective and open Western approach toward the nation.

A poll held in Canada, Germany, France and the United Kingdom by United States-based digital media company Politico, in partnership with UK-based research consultancy Public First, found that respondents in these US-allied nations see China as a more

dependable partner than the US. The results of the poll, which were released on March 15, also showed that respondents believe China is leading the world in advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence.

The Politico poll's outcome aligns with broader global findings. An opinion poll conducted globally in January by the European Council on Foreign Relations reported growing anticipation worldwide for China's influence to increase over the next decade. The survey also found that more people in the West now view China as an "ally" or a "necessary partner" of their respective countries.

Similarly, the Global Soft Power Index 2026, released by UK-based consultancy Brand Finance in January, showed that China is increas-

ingly perceived as predictable, reliable, and capable of delivering tangible benefits, as it combines domestic development with structured international engagement.

Experts attribute this significant shift in Western people's perception to the stark contrast between Beijing and Washington in terms of policy consistency.

Jian Junbo, director of the Center for China-Europe Relations at Fudan University's Institute of International Studies, said the controversial foreign policies of the current US administration have significantly hit its allies, leading to a sharp decline in trust.

"China, in contrast, has continuously maintained stable policies and a long-term strategic approach, consistently serving as a stabilizing force on the international stage.

This comparison is stark and is driving the change in perception," he said.

Anna Malindog-Uy, vice-president of the Asian Century Philippines Strategic Studies Institute, a Manila-based think tank, said the main driver of the opinion shift is "credibility by contrast". "Compared with perceived US unpredictability, China is seen as steadier and has longer horizon," she said.

The trend of positive views on China is particularly pronounced among the younger population. The Politico poll found that respondents ages 18 to 24 were significantly more supportive of building closer ties with China than their older counterparts.

Jian, from Fudan University, linked this trend to the media consumption pattern of young people.

"Younger groups get much of their information from social platforms, where there is more objective reporting about China. This allows them to understand China in a more authentic, objective and comprehensive way, leading to higher favorability," he said.

Xiao He, a research fellow at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' Institute of World Economics and Politics, noted that young people view China "as a rising nation, unburdened by the ideological baggage of the Cold War era, which allows for a more objective view".

While acknowledging social media's pivotal role in opinion building, Xiao argued that the fundamental appeal of China lies in its rapid economic and technological development.