



Li Keqiang, Premier of China's State Council recently wrapped up a six-day trip to Britain and Greece that infused fresh vigour into China's ties and cooperation with the two countries and with Europe as a whole.

In Greece, Li met separately with President of the Hellenic Republic Karolos Papoulias, Prime Minister Antonis Samaras and Parliament Speaker Evangelos Meimarakis. He also addressed the China-Greece Maritime Cooperation Forum, expounding China's views on maritime affairs. China is ready to work with Greece to achieve constant and further growth of bilateral relations and to deepen cooperation with Greece in such fields as technology, agriculture and infrastructure, Premier Li said when meeting with the Greek President. He said that his country sees Greece as a good friend and partner within the European Union and expects it to play an even bigger role in promoting China-Europe ties as the then-holder of the rotating EU Presidency.

In his talks with Prime Minister Samaras, Premier Li said that China is fully confident about the prospect of Greece's development and stands ready to further consolidate political mutual trust with the European country and lift the comprehensive strategic partnership to a higher level. He pledged to work with Greece to explore new economic growth points, especially in maritime cooperation, saying that the two countries should make joint efforts in developing maritime economy, technology and tourism and organising the China-Greece Marine Year programme in 2015. Calling on both sides to continuously expand bilateral trade and deepen cultural exchanges, the visiting Chinese Premier said that he appreciated Greece's efforts as the rotating EU President in pushing forward China-Europe ties.

When meeting with Parliament President Meimarakis, Premier Li said China is ready to boost exchanges and cooperation with the Hellenic Parliament and political parties and called on the Greek



Parliament to continue backing China-Greece cooperation.

The Chinese Premier, accompanied by his Greek counterpart, also inspected the Piraeus Container Terminal (PCT) project, which is jointly operated by Chinese state-owned shipping giant COSCO and the Greek Port Authority. The two Prime Ministers vowed to make Piraeus the top port in Europe and expand maritime cooperation.

Addressing the China-Greece Maritime Cooperation Forum, Premier Li said China is committed to settling maritime disputes through dialogue and negotiation on the basis of respecting historical facts and international law. He also called for stronger maritime cooperation between the two nations.

During the visit, Greek Merchant Marine Minister Miltiadis Varvitsiotis and members of the 14-member Chinese delegation signed three bilateral agreements concerning the financing of Greek-owned small and medium-sized enterprises operating in China by the China Development Bank, maritime protection and the provision of services by the China Classification Society, a specialised inspection and certification body, to Greek-flagged ships.



Agreements signed during landmark visit by the Chinese Premier

China and Greece stand ready to jointly deepen their comprehensive strategic partnership in accordance with principle of mutual benefit and win-win results, said a joint statement issued after talks between Premier Li and President Papoulias. It hailed the China-Greece comprehensive strategic partnership, which was established in 2006, as well as the fruitful achievements in bilateral ties since Greek Prime Minister Antonis Samaras' visit to China last year.

The two sides are willing to jointly deepen the China-Greece comprehensive strategic partnership, make a full use of the bilateral cooperation mechanisms including intergovernmental connection mechanisms and mixed committees and keep strengthening cooperation between the two countries in all fields under the principle of mutual benefit and win-win outcome.

China and Greece agree to keep the momentum of exchange of high-level visits, make contacts of personnel at all levels close and further enhance mutual understanding and political mutual trust, so as to lay a firm political foundation for their pragmatic cooperation, said the statement. The two sides stressed the importance of mutual understanding and pledged to respect each other's core interests and major concerns, said the statement.

Greece will firmly pursue the one-China policy, respect China's sovereignty and territorial integrity and support China's realisation of national reunification, while China admits and supports Greece's positive role on global and regional issues, it read, adding that China appreciates Greece's successful efforts to deal with the economic crisis and reaffirms its will to continue to offer Greece help within its capacity.

The two sides further welcomed the restart of negotiations over the Cyprus issue under the mediation of the UN Secretary General, expecting a fair and lasting solution based on relevant resolutions of the UN Security Council as early as possible.

China and Greece believe that the most effective approach for solving the China-European Union economic and trade friction is



dialogue and consultation. China appreciates Greece's positive efforts to promote China-EU relations in the first half of 2014 as holder of the rotating EU Presidency.

Both sides further opposed all forms of trade and investment protectionism and stated that they are willing to support and facilitate each other in terms of financing, investment and trade, etc. Finally, the two sides noted that they stand ready to take positive measures to address the issue of bilateral trade imbalance. China is willing to import more quality goods from Greece, while Greece welcomes the participation by Chinese enterprises in the privatisation of its state-owned assets, said the document.



Premier of China's State Council Li Keqiang pictured during his Official Visit to Greece with:

1. Prime Minister Antonis Samaras. 2. President of the Hellenic Republic Karolos Papoulias.
3. Parliament President Evangelos Meimarakis, First Vice President Ioannis Tragakis, MP Dora Bakoyianni and MP Konstantinos Tsiaras. 4. Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Evangelos Venizelos in discussion with visiting Chinese Foreign Minister, Wang Yi. 5. In front of the Parthenon - Premier Li Keqiang and Mrs. Cheng Hong and Premier Antonis Samaras and Mrs. Georgia Kretikos. 6. Premier Li addresses the China-Greece Maritime Cooperation Forum. 7. Laying a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Constitution Square. 8. The two Premiers and their wives admire ancient Greek culture at one of the many museums that they visited on their tour of Greece. 9. The two Premiers pose for a photo with workers at the Piraeus Container Terminal (PCT) project.

(PHOTOGRAPHS BY A.ZONTANOS, G.KONTARINIS, T.BOLARI, G.ANTONIOU, K.KATOMERIS/EUROKINISSI & A.ELEFTERIOU/HELLENIC PARLIAMENT.)