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Chinese President Xi Jinping poses for a group photo with Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, Tunisia's President Kais Saied, the United Arab Emirates' President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States Ahmed Aboul-Gheit, and heads of delegations of 22 Arab countries in Beijing on May 30, 2024. Photo: Xinhua

Chinese President Xi Jinping said at the opening ceremony of the 10th ministerial conference of the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum on Thursday that China is ready to work with the Arab side to put in place "five cooperation frameworks" to step up the building of a China-Arab community with a shared future. The Chinese president also said that the war in Gaza should not continue indefinitely and reaffirmed China's stance to promote lasting settlement for the Palestinian issue.

At his keynote speech, President Xi said that China-Arab relations have kept scaling new heights since the beginning of the new century. At the first China-Arab States Summit in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia in December 2022, he and the Arab colleagues agreed unanimously to build a China-Arab community with a shared future in the new era. China

is satisfied with the progress and it will work with the Arab side to enhance the role of the Summit in providing strategic guidance for continued leapfrog growth of China-Arab relations.

Xi announced that China will host the second China-Arab States Summit in 2026, which will be another milestone in China-Arab relations.

During the keynote speech, President Xi also noted that the Middle East is a land bestowed with broad prospects for development, but the war is still raging on it. Since last October, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict has escalated drastically, throwing the people into tremendous sufferings.

War should not continue indefinitely. Justice should not be absent forever. Commitment to the two-state solution should not be wavered at will, said Xi. China firmly supports the establishment of an independent state of Palestine that enjoys full sovereignty based on the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital. It supports Palestine's full membership in the UN, and supports a more broad-based, authoritative and effective international peace conference, Xi said.

Analysts said that in the keynote speech, President Xi has systematically put forward new initiatives to promote pragmatic cooperation between China and Arab states in various fields, including on innovation, finance, energy, trade and people-to-people exchanges and also expounding on China's policy in the Middle East, which would guide the building of a China-Arab community with a shared future and promote a just and reasonable solution to the Palestinian issue to contribute to peace and stability in the Middle East.

The 10th ministerial conference of the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum adopted a China-Arab states joint statement on the Palestinian issue, the Beijing Declaration, and an execution plan of the forum for 2024-2026.

According to the Chinese Foreign Ministry, the joint statement on the Palestinian issue has expressed that China and Arab countries share deep concern over the humanitarian crisis caused by the prolonged Gaza conflict, and stressed the firm stance and key consensus shared by the two sides on the following issues: promoting cease-fire for Gaza, ensuring humanitarian aids, opposing forced displacement of Palestinian people, supporting Palestine to become a full member of the UN, and promoting settlement for the Palestinian issue based on the two-state solution.

Bilateral meetings between top leaders of China and some Arab countries were also held in recent days. On Thursday, Xi held talks with President of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan. On Wednesday, Xi held talks with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi.

Brighter future

President Xi pointed out at the opening ceremony of the conference that through joint efforts, the "eight major cooperation initiatives" for China-Arab practical cooperation, which he proposed at the first China-Arab States Summit, have made early harvests, and China is ready to work with the Arab side on that basis to put in place "five cooperation frameworks" to step up the building of a China-Arab community with a shared future.

The five frameworks include a more dynamic framework for innovation, an expanded framework for investment and finance cooperation, a more multifaceted framework for energy cooperation, a more balanced framework for mutually beneficial economic and trade ties and a broader framework for people-to-people exchanges.

Under the framework for innovation, China will build with the Arab side 10 joint laboratories in such areas as life and health, AI, green and low-carbon development, modern agriculture, and space and information technology. China also stands ready to build with the Arab side a joint space debris observation center and a Beidou application, cooperation and development center, and steps up cooperation in manned space mission and passenger aircraft.

China-Arab cooperation is developing in a multi-dimensional and in-depth direction. Green economy, high technology and regional security governance will become new focal points for cooperation between both sides. This will not only help promote the development of China and Arab states but also make a positive contribution to peace and stability in the Middle East, Sun Degang, director of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Fudan University, told the Global Times.

The high-tech field, particularly in artificial intelligence and the digital economy, will be a new driving force for bilateral cooperation, injecting fresh impetus into China-Arab cooperation, Sun said.

Li Xinggong, a research fellow at the Institute for Studies on the Mediterranean Rim at Zhejiang International Studies University, told the Global Times on Thursday that "the development cooperation between China and Arab states will enter a new stage."

"The China-Arab relations will, on one hand, show new characteristics of all-fields, all-weather and sustainable cooperation. On the other hand, China and Arab countries will focus on hotspot issues in the Middle East, and to make joint efforts to promote a lasting settlement for the Palestinian issue based on justice and fairness, and to build a better geopolitical environment for the China-Arab cooperation in the region," Li noted.

Settlement for Palestinian issue

On Thursday, President Xi noted that commitment to two-State solution should not be wavered at will in solving Palestinian-Israeli conflict. He announced that on top of the previous 100 million yuan of emergency humanitarian assistance, China will provide an additional 500 million yuan of assistance to help ease the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and

support post-conflict reconstruction. China will also donate \$3 million to the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East in support of its emergency humanitarian assistance to Gaza.

Sun said that China and the Arab states have reached a significant consensus on resolving the Palestinian issue, agreeing that the right of Palestinians to establish an independent state cannot be ignored as it benefits not only Palestine but also helps Israel build a peaceful and stable environment in the same region.

Against the backdrop of the current Gaza conflict and humanitarian crisis, both China and the Arab states hope to play a positive role in resolving the Palestinian issue. They share similar stance on resolving regional issues and hope for a "soft landing" of the Palestinian issue and are committed to promoting reconciliation in the Middle East, Sun said.

"In the future, China and Arab countries will take further action to promote reconciliation among different political groups within Palestine, and strengthen the unity within Palestine. Pushing the UN to send peacekeeping forces to Gaza, especially Rafah city, might be a direction for the China-Arab cooperation," Li said.

China-Arab forum highlights willingness to consolidate bilateral ties

The 10th Ministerial Conference of the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum being held this week in Beijing is particularly ...

