

Xinhua. 2015. "Interview: Chile-China cooperation benefits both sides: Chilean FM". Xinhua, December, 20

SANTIAGO, Dec. 19 (Xinhua)-- Chile and China have enjoyed 45 years of good diplomatic ties and are now seeing their bilateral cooperation thriving in many areas, Chilean Foreign Minister Heraldo Munoz told Xinhua in a recent interview.

Noting that Chile-China relations are based on mutual respect, cooperation and increasing exchanges, Munoz hailed the free trade agreement (FTA) signed between the two countries in 2005.

As a result of the FTA deal, China has become Chile's main trade partner, with bilateral trade reaching 32.93 billion U.S. dollars in 2014, the minister said.

The two countries have common interests in boosting cooperation on investment, innovation, technological development, energy, culture and tourism, he said.

Munoz also said that official visits by top leaders have been "a fundamental pillar in tightening political, economic and cultural ties."

Chilean President Michelle Bachelet has had two bilateral meetings with Chinese President Xi Jinping, respectively in Brasilia in July 2014 and in Beijing in November 2014, during an APEC summit.

During Chinese Premier Li Keqiang's visit to Chile in May 2015, the two countries signed a trove of cooperation deals.

The two sides have agreed then to prevent double taxation, and facilitate the use of the Chinese currency renminbi or RMB in bilateral commercial transactions, among others.

This year, China's Construction Bank has also been appointed as a clearing bank for transactions in renminbi in Chile.

According to Munoz, the progress achieved in making renminbi a settlement currency in Chile-China trade is of particular importance as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has added renminbi to its basket of reserve currencies (Special Drawing Rights) alongside the U.S. dollar, the euro, the yen and the pound.

"This strengthens Santiago as an import financial services center," said Munoz.

The foreign minister also mentioned a trade delegation to China this year, led by former Chilean President Eduardo Frei, now the country's extraordinary ambassador to the Asia-Pacific.

Frei led the delegation of Chilean officials and entrepreneurs to visit China in September for the "Chile Week in China."

The delegation took part in 38 events held in Beijing and Shanghai to promote Chile's image as an investment destination for Chinese entrepreneurs. End item