

《Only a candid US can pave way for fruitful talks》

Among all the issues the first round of China-US Diplomatic and Security Dialogue, to be held in Washington on Wednesday, aims to touch upon, the pursuit of clarity and consistency will be the most closely watched. State Councilor Yang Jiechi is due to co-chair the dialogue with US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Secretary of Defense James Mattis.

Designed according to the consensus reached by the heads of state of the two countries at their meeting at Mar-a-Lago, Florida, in April, the dialogue will involve in-depth exchange of views on China-US ties and other critical issues of shared concern, and of course, a road map for future diplomatic and security-related cooperation. And for it to bear the desired fruits, candidness is the key.

Mixed signals have been received from time to time from US President Donald Trump's administration. Known for his unpredictability, the United States president could in one breath promise to build a sound relationship with China and in the next send warships to continue the "freedom of navigation" operations in the South China Sea. China needs less confusing responses to its consistent, coherent US policy that rests on respect and shared interests, and not on confrontation.

The dialogue in Washington is expected to reduce uncertainties in bilateral ties. A comprehensive exchange between senior officials from both sides would make clear their respective diplomatic focuses and security priorities, laying the groundwork for more concerted efforts to manage their differences.

In particular, how to resolve thorny issues, from trade frictions and the deployment of the US Terminal High Altitude Area Defense anti-missile system in the Republic of Korea to cyberattacks and human rights, will be high on the agenda of the dialogue. Highly controversial, these issues warrant honest, face-to-face exchanges of views on what defines the China-US relations.

The Trump administration appears to make Pyongyang's nuclear program as the most critical factor in its ties with Beijing. Neither China nor the US wants the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to develop nuclear weapons. The crucial disagreement centers on whether to adopt a dialogue- and UN-oriented approach to resolve it, as proposed by China, or to impose unilateral sanctions.

For Beijing, Washington's stance on the Taiwan question, which basically boils down to whether it sticks to the one-China principle, matters a great deal when it comes to China-US relations. The Trump administration has acknowledged that both the Chinese mainland and Taiwan belong to one China, but Washington continues to sell arms to and maintain semi-official political interaction with the island. It is important therefore that participants in the diplomatic and security dialogue reach a consensus on addressing each other's core concerns.

As the world's largest and second-largest economies, the US and China attach as much importance to global issues as to bilateral agendas, in the shared hope that the world order would evolve smoothly without losing its stability. The Washington dialogue is expected to stress the authority and legitimacy of the UN in addressing regional and global affairs, which is in the interest of both countries and the international community as a whole.

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