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US, China will seek 'substantive' summit: official

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By Jack Freifelder in New York (China Daily USA)

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China's opportunity to host the 2014 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Summit will allow the US and the world's second-largest economy to discuss several key issues in their relationship, according to a senior official with APEC.

Robert Wang, a senior US official for APEC, said his talks with Chinese counterparts have shown a true interest in shaping developments that are "substantive in nature".

"China is looking for ways to highlight how we can work together, and there are a number of areas where we have specific interests," Wang said on Tuesday.

"When I talk to my counterparts, they're looking for something substantive in nature. China and the US are trying to work together because we realize how important our relationship is," he added.

"The challenges are 21 different economies trying to find a result that the leaders will be happy with, so from that point of view we have the same issue," Wang added.

Wang made his comments on Tuesday night at a panel discussion on the APEC meeting held at the Asia Society's headquarters in New York. Also on the panel was Monica Whaley, president of the National Center for APEC (NCAPEC), Peter Petri, professor of international finance at Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts, and Ann M. Weeks, vice-president of Global Government Affairs with safety consultant and certification company Underwriters Laboratories LLC (UL).

Curtis S. Chin, a former US ambassador to the Asian Development Bank (ADB) who moderated the discussion, which touched on a variety of topics related to this year's APEC Summit, including economic recovery, climate change, free trade agreements and corruption issues.

APEC, established in 1989, hosts a yearly forum for 21 Pacific Rim economies seeking to promote free trade in the Asia-Pacific region.

China's theme for this year's APEC meeting, "Shaping the Future through Asia-Pacific Partnership," consists of a three-pronged approach.

"The first priority is advancing economic integration," Wang said. "The second one is promoting innovative development, economic reform and growth, and the third goal is strengthening comprehensive connectivity and infrastructure development."

The Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate (APP) focuses on issues affecting climate change, including expanding investment in clean energy technologies and exploring ways to reduce air pollution.



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ROBERT WANG
A SENIOR US OFFICIAL FOR APEC

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The APP - which brought together Australia, Canada, China, India, Japan, South Korea and the US - officially concluded its joint work in April 2011, but a number of individual projects continue.

Petri said 2014 is going to be a big year for developing trade agreements and other partnerships in the Asia-Pacific region.

"The benefits of these deals would be very large - both for the US and across the board," Petri said. "It's a way to weave together the transpacific architecture, but this is a crucial year. The US has been involved very intensely for years now to lay the seeds for a high quality trade agreement across the region, which is now beginning to happen."

"Even more, it would set a template that would help to guide future trade agreements," Petri added.

Whaley said the US plays a pivotal role in the yearly APEC negotiations.

"US engagement is critical to APEC," she said on Tuesday in an interview with China Daily. "APEC has created this opportunity every year for all of those leaders to come together - in a bit of an informal context - and I think those meetings and discussions are very positive for the region."

Chin, the former US ambassador, said managing expectations for the upcoming summit is important.

"Success can be about managing expectations," Chin said in a Jan 13 interview with the Asia Society. "APEC indeed has great convening powers: the ability to bring countries and people together."

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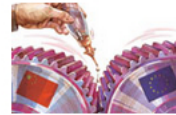
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