



PRESS RELEASE

Xi Jinping Makes Italy 'an Offer You Cannot Refuse' as Italian President Visits Beijing

Feb. 23, 2017 (EIRNS)—Chinese President Xi Jinping invited Italy to attend the May 14-15 international forum on "Belt and Road: Cooperation for Common Prosperity" in Beijing, directly extending the invitation to President Sergio Mattarella, who is leading a political and business delegation visiting China. The two countries signed deals for \$5 billion, including one that involves Moon-mapping.

Italy "offers incomparable advantages as a door between East and West," Xi told Mattarella. Such advantages are given by Italy's geographical position and by its political role in Europe. "There is a pioneering spirit in our two countries," Xi said. The Chinese President cited Italian missionary Prospero Intorcetta, who first translated Confucius in Europe in the 17th Century, and who, like Mattarella, hailed from Sicily. Intorcetta is buried in Hangzhou.

The Italian delegation participated in the fourth Italy-China Business Forum and in the first Italy-China Cultural Forum.

In his speech given at the conclusion of the two forums, Mattarella said that

"Italy can offer experiences and knowledge in sectors of great interest for China, such as food security, health, environmental technologies, sustainable urbanization, logistics and transports, aerospace."

The deals signed by the two delegations include Italian participation in a joint mapping of the Moon and joint experiments in human flight on the Chinese space station in 2022, as well as Italian technology and interiors for two large cruise ships to be assembled in Shanghai, custom agreements between the ports of Genoa and Ningbo, and supply of Italian gas turbines.

The deals, however, show that Italy is unprepared to fully join the Belt and Road paradigm. In fact, Mattarella did express "utmost interest for the One Belt, One Road initiative" and said that "the Italian system of ports and logistics offers China the possibility to complete most efficiently and conveniently the last precious track of the 'New Silk Road' down to the heart of Europe" and towards Central and Eastern Europe, but the strategic importance of Southern Italy was entirely neglected. Upgrading northern Italian ports such as Genoa is important, but more important would be to build a Southern Italian platform, with the Gioia Tauro port, the Messina Bridge, and the rail and roadway modernization of south-north transport infrastructure.